

MEDIA UPDATE: April 28

—HEADLINES— *Scroll down for full stories and links.*

| Alaska National Guard |

1. Ravn's bankruptcy leaves medical transport vacuum in rural Alaska

| Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 in Alaska |

2. Scientists are struggling to understand COVID-19. As Alaska ramps up testing, what will they find out?
3. Federal judge temporarily prevents Alaska Native Corporations from receiving COVID-19 aid
4. Anchorage restaurants, salons begin reopening process
5. Four new cases of COVID-19 reported by DHSS Monday
6. S'more money: Alaska Girl Scouts get federal loan to help during coronavirus pandemic

| Novel Coronavirus/National Guard News |

7. National Guard COVID-19 Response
8. Latest National Guard COVID-19 update: 44,500 troops mobilized with 83 percent on Title 32 orders

| Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 National & World |

9. In coronavirus battle, scientists have teamed up with billionaires for COVID-19 'Manhattan Project': report
10. Drones could help fight coronavirus by air-dropping medical supplies
11. Reopening states too early will bring deadlier outcomes, coronavirus projections show

—ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD—

1. Ravn's bankruptcy leaves medical transport vacuum in rural Alaska

AlaskaPublicMedia by Krysti Shallenberger, Alaska's Energy Desk/April 27

AKNG Excerpt: While the state plans to use the National Guard to help transport COVID-19 patients from rural communities, the lack of reliable air service is putting a financial burden on rural healthcare providers who pay more for charter flights to get patients to hospitals

Full article: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/04/27/ravns-bankruptcy-leaves-medical-transport-vacuum-in-rural-alaska/>

— NOVEL CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 IN ALASKA—

2. Scientists are struggling to understand COVID-19. As Alaska ramps up testing, what will they find out?

Alaska Public Media by Andrew Kitchenman, Alaska Public Media & KTOO/April 28

As the state starts allowing businesses to reopen, it's focusing on robust testing as a way to keep coronavirus infections down.

But there's a lot you can learn from testing data, besides just who has the disease. State researchers are working to understand where it is; what symptoms people have; and how to prepare for future outbreaks.

To stop the spread of the coronavirus, public health workers must first know who has it.

But there have been obstacles. State Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink recently ticked off different things that limit testing.

"It's the swabs," she said. "It's the having a clinician think to do it. It's having a place to do it. It's making sure there are no barriers to do it. It's the viral medium. It's the transport. It's the machine to do it on. It's the reagents. It's the little plastic parts of the reagent machine."

The state has made progress on several of those things she listed. It's added trained staff in state labs. It's converted lab equipment to be used for the tests. It's gotten more supplies, including having a Palmer manufacturer make swabs.

All of this has allowed the state to ramp up the number of Alaskans who are tested and expand the definition of who should be tested — basically, anyone who has any symptoms of the virus.

Experts nationally and in Alaska have varying estimates about how many tests should be done — some of the numbers are much higher than what the state is doing. Zink said she once told Gov. Mike Dunleavy the state would benefit from 2.5 million to 3 million tests over four to six months.

At this point, Zink basically rejects putting a number on it.

"We don't have a set goal," she said. "Our set goal is to keep Alaskans healthy, and we will test whatever we need to do to get there."

The number of reported tests of Alaskans has increased each week, reaching more than 4,000 the week beginning April 19. Zink said the state labs can handle more than 7,000.

"The goal is to really make sure we're testing broadly and widely across all populations and all regions in our state," she said.

There are three types of places where that testing is taking place: state labs in Anchorage and Fairbanks; commercial labs in the Lower 48; and hospitals and clinics. The state and commercial labs have increased their capacity and speed in recent weeks, while the hospitals and clinics have come online as a new source for testing.

Starting this week, all public health nursing clinics will start offering the test free of charge. The state has worked out deals with Fred Meyer and Carrs to begin offering tests in tents outside their stores. And it's aiming to ship more test kits to rural areas.

Right now, Alaska has the lowest rate of positive tests of any state. It doesn't rank as highly in the number of tests per resident — it's 11th.

“Here in Alaska we lucked out, I think, so far, with relatively very low numbers of positive COVID, and even fewer fatalities,” said Dr. Bernd Jilly, who directs the state public health labs. “So that’s really good.”

Jilly said testing will be crucial to answering basic questions that scientists are still struggling with.

“I think it’s very important, because we are nowhere near done with this thing,” he said. “And because this is a brand new disease, we have no idea how it’s going to behave.”

Jilly pointed out that we don’t know how long COVID-19 patients maintain immunity once they recover, or even if the disease can return after hiding in the body, like shingles and herpes.

“We don’t know, so the more testing we can do, the more people can get a good picture of this,” Jilly said. “And the thing is, if we can catch people early in the course of their disease, we can sequester them, limit their interaction with susceptible folks and, you know, keep it as much at bay as we possibly can.”

Jilly sees potential in using blood tests in the coming months to get a better sense of what share of the population has contracted the virus.

“Those are these big-question tests and studies that are done, usually after the fact, so that we could be better prepared for the next time it happens,” he said.

For example, if there is another increase in cases in the fall, the testing the state is doing now will allow it to know more then.

Blood tests aren’t helpful in diagnosing patients. And there have been problems found with the precision of some of the blood tests that are being marketed.

Link: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/04/28/scientists-are-struggling-to-understand-covid-19-as-alaska-ramps-up-testing-what-will-they-find-out/>

3. Federal judge temporarily prevents Alaska Native Corporations from receiving COVID-19 aid *KTUU by Patrick Enslow/April 27*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - A federal judge filed a preliminary injunction Monday preventing the U.S. Treasury Department from distributing coronavirus relief funds to Alaska Native Corporations.

Earlier in April, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the Tulalip Tribes, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians filed suit against the Treasury Department to prevent the distribution of COVID-19 relief funds to Alaska Native Corporations. The Akiak Native Community, Asa’carsamiut Tribe and Aleut Community of St. Paul Island tribes also joined the suit as plaintiffs.

The federally recognized tribal governments argued that Alaska Native Corporations do not meet the definition of an Indian tribe or tribal government, so they should not be eligible for the \$8 billion emergency aid available under Title V of the CARES Act.

The ruling will delay the federal deadline to distribute relief money to tribal governments.

In a joint statement released following Monday's decision, the ANCSA Regional Association (ARA) and Alaska Native Village Corporation Association (ANVCA) said the decision will deprive Alaska Native populations of what they say is needed economic assistance.

"We are disappointed in this decision. We still believe our position will find success in the court system, as the law is clear," the statement said in part. "This will mean a delay in necessary resources and economic assistance for Alaska Native people in our communities and our state. However, Alaska Native people have a history of resilience and strength. Together we will prevent the spread of COVID-19, care for those who are sick, and repair our economies."

ARA and ANVCA said they look forward to a ruling that will allow them to receive additional aid for their communities.

Members of Alaska's congressional delegation expressed disagreement with the decision, arguing that the funding package was always intended to include Alaska Native corporations as they fit the definition of tribes under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

"I'm very disappointed, as one with the delegation that worked to make sure the intent within the CARES Act was very clear, that Alaska Native corporations would be considered as tribal governments for purposes of the CARES Act," Sen. Lisa Murkowski said during a Q&A in Gov. Dunleavy's daily COVID-19 briefing Monday evening.

"I can't imagine a judge would rule that Alaska Native Corporations are not considered tribes when the plain language of the law in the CARES Act says that they are," Sen. Dan Sullivan said in the briefing.

Link: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/Federal-judge-temporarily-prevents-Alaska-Native-Corporations-from-receiving-coronavirus-relief-funds-569998631.html>

Related: <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/2020/04/27/federal-judge-temporarily-halts-treasury-from-issuing-covid-19-emergency-funds-to-alaska-native-corporations/>
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/zoetillman/native-tribes-lawsuit-coronavirus-relief-money-corporations>

4. Anchorage restaurants, salons begin reopening process

Associated Press by Mark Thiessen/April 27

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The first signs of activity returned to Alaska's largest city Monday as businesses slowly began reopening following closures because of the coronavirus.

"Well, thank God the beauty parlors are open," Anchorage resident Cyndi Otto said while walking with her granddaughter near Earthquake Park.

Personal care services, like barber shops and nail and hair salons, were allowed to reopen Monday, as were restaurants. However, all are operating under strict guidelines intended to guard against spreading the virus.

The state allowed businesses to begin reopening last Friday, but Anchorage waited to allow businesses to get employees back and for some, to decide whether it makes sense to open yet. Gov. Mike Dunleavy said the state was working with communities. Anchorage's initial reopening phase tracked largely with that of the state's.

"There is hope, there is a future," Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz said Friday in unveiling the criteria local businesses must follow. "We have taken a punch, and we're getting back up."

But don't expect the hustle-and-bustle that Anchorage exhibited in February — before the mandates restricting or closing businesses took hold — or even in November, before winter set in. Instead, only a few businesses were open.

From mom and pop diners to the swankiest eateries atop downtown hotels, all restaurants will require reservations or some other type of check-in for limited dine-in service. Wait lists are likely.

Regulations limit restaurants to 25% capacity, with more than enough elbow room. Tables must be spaced 10 feet apart, and only household members can sit at a table. Eateries can continue offering takeout service, as many already were doing when dine-in service was barred.

Simon Newall, who co-owns Sweet Basil Café with his wife Tanya, was ready for customers Monday morning.

"According to the mandates set by the governor and the city, we have our tables separated. We have a mask ready to talk to our customers, we can still do our take-outs and the in-house dining, as long as we meet the rules," he said.

"I think the city and state have done a great job throughout this entire thing," Newall added. "It's just a matter of, let's keep on going. Keep safe, and let's feed everybody."

Restaurants will also have to do a little paperwork on their customers.

A log with every customer's first and last name and contact phone number must be maintained by the restaurant and kept for 30 days in case it's needed for contact tracing. That's a step not required by the state rules but one required by the city.

All employees must wear fabric face masks, and customers are encouraged to wear them unless eating.

Barber shops, hair salons and other personal care services must begin taking reservations and not allow walk-in service. No waiting rooms are allowed.

Only one customer per stylist or technician is allowed in, and work stations must be 10 feet apart. Each stylist must wear a surgical mask, which cannot be reused, and customers must wear cloth face coverings.

Larry Love, the manager at Hair Doctors, was happy to be back to work as bills were piling up. But his customers might be even happier.

“They don’t even mind the health regulations as long as they’re getting a haircut,” he said after giving an airman a high-and-tight military haircut. “They’re feeling a lot better and feeling good about themselves.”

Otto, a lifelong Alaskan who lived through the 1964 earthquake, said she felt the measures put in place by government were a bit Draconian.

“We are in the great state of Alaska, where there’s a thousand acres per individual. There’s no reason for us to be hunkered down in our homes after we’ve been hunkered down in our homes since November,” she said.

Link: https://www.argus-press.com/news/national/article_100ab8c3-029d-52e0-9da0-82be850691e4.html

5. Four new cases of COVID-19 reported by DHSS Monday

KTUU by Cheyenne Mathews/April 27

ANCHORAGE (KTUU) - The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reported four new cases of COVID-19 in three communities. The addition of two cases in Anchorage, one in Eagle River and one in Wasilla brings the state count up to 345.

Three of the new cases are male and one is female with two between 20-29, one between 40-49 and one 50-59-years-old.

As of April 26, one more person has been hospitalized making a total of 37 hospitalizations. DHSS also states there was a new recovered case this weekend, and 218 of Alaska’s cases are listed as recovered.

These cases follow the public announcement of Gov. Mike Dunleavy’s Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan which began allowing limited openings of restaurants, stores, personal services, and other public-facing services on April 24.

Monday is the first day of a limited opening in Anchorage after Mayor Ethan Berkowitz issued an emergency order that allows non-critical businesses to open if they follow safety requirements.

Link: <https://www.ktuu.com/content/news/UPDATE-Four-new-cases-of-COVID-19-reported-by-DHSS-Monday-569989071.html>

6. S’more money: Alaska Girl Scouts get federal loan to help during coronavirus pandemic

Fox News by Bob D’Angelo, Cox Media Group National Content Desk/April 27

There is always a market for Girl Scout cookies. But the coronavirus pandemic has cooled off sales, leaving more than 144,000 unsold boxes of Thin Mints, S'mores, Samoas and other flavors sitting in Alaska garages.

So, the Girl Scouts of Alaska asked for federal help and received a Paycheck Protection Program loan Monday, The Anchorage Daily News reported. First National Bank Alaska helped push the loan through for the council, which is one of two Girl Scout organizations in the state and covers the southern part of Alaska, the newspaper reported.

The money is not going to the girls who sell the cookies. The Girl Scouts of Alaska, which has 20 full-time employees and provides camps and scholarships for 3,500 girls, is the recipient of the loan.

Leslie Ridle, head of Girl Scouts of Alaska, said fears of the girls becoming infected with COVID-19 caused the organization to cut its six-week sales season to three weeks, the Daily News reported.

"It was frenzied shopping, and people were hoarding cookies like they were toilet paper," Ridle told the newspaper.

Ridle said the bank's loan officer was "amazing," calling at nights and on weekends -- and even on Easter Sunday -- to gather information to make the loan happen.

With the loan, employees can keep their jobs. For now, they are providing online programs for Girl Scouts, including flamenco dancing and magic trick lessons, the Daily News reported. The girls, meanwhile, are working on their badges. There is a new one now -- a COVID-19 badge that emphasizes good hygiene, the newspaper reported.

"(The loan is) our bridge to keep things going," Ridle told the Daily News.

Large companies like ConocoPhillips, GCI and First National Bank Alaska have made big buys of the comfort food to help out.

"I'm confident that once the economy gets up and going, our girls can get back to selling," Ridle told the Daily News.

Link: <https://www.fox23.com/news/trending/smore-money-alaska-girl-scouts-get-federal-loan-help-during-coronavirus-pandemic/UA5AAEOMWNGN54SBBESGG5AM/>

Related: <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/2020/04/26/girl-scouts-sitting-on-144000-unsold-cookie-boxes-get-federal-relief-in-alaska/>

<https://www.kvue.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/alaska-girl-scouts-get-federal-relief-loan-to-cover-lost-cookie-sales/269-db0b2744-6ad2-4a25-b636-ae6803435655>

— NOVEL CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 NATIONAL GUARD NEWS—

7. National Guard COVID-19 Response

Georgia National Guard ramps up COVID-19 testing; Colorado National Guard testing residents for COVID-19; NY National Guard Soldier beats COVID-19 and joins the fight

Latest news articles: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/coronavirus/>

8. Latest National Guard COVID-19 update: 44,500 troops mobilized with 83 percent on Title 32 orders

Military Times by Howard Altman/April 27

The number of Guard troops mobilized in the effort to cope with the coronavirus pandemic continues to increase.

There are more 44,500 Air and Army National Guard professionals supporting the COVID-19 crisis response at the direction of their governors as of Monday afternoon. That's an increase of about 800 from Friday.

In addition, 43 states, three territories and the District of Columbia have now been approved for use of federal funds for state missions under Title 32.

As of Monday morning, 792 Guard troops had tested positive for COVID-19, according to the latest figures provided by the Pentagon. That was an increase of 51 from Friday.

Of those troops activated in the COVID-19 response, 36,900 are currently under orders authorized for Title 32 502(f) status, said Army Master Sgt. W. Michael Houk, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau. That's an increase of about 900 troops since Thursday.

"As states amend orders and issue new ones based on their needs this number will keep moving," he told Military Times. "Also based on response needs, as determined at the state level, some orders may remain under state active duty."

The status, ordered by President Donald Trump, means the federal government is picking up 100 percent of the cost, with control remaining in the hands of governors. It also means that those troops — risking their health and that of their families by being on the front lines of the coronavirus fight — receive healthcare and increased housing allowance equal to active duty and reserve troops doing the same work.

There was an initial catch. Only troops on 31-day orders were eligible for the increased benefits. That problem, however, was since fixed by Trump and now states are going through the process of either initiating or amending those orders to meet the 31-day requirement for increased troop benefits.

In addition to those on Title 32 orders, there are also about 7,600 Guard troops across the nation on State Activated Duty who are not receiving increased benefits.

National Guard officials highlighted some of their efforts:

Members of the West Virginia National Guard (WVNG) and West Virginia University (WVU) John Chambers College of Business and Economics (Chambers College) have joined forces as "Task Force Petersen" to develop key data systems to forecast and track the availability, procurement, distribution and shortfalls of critical medical supplies throughout West Virginia during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Task Force Petersen, named after the supply sergeant in the John Wayne movie "The Green Berets" and aligning with the WVNG's Special Forces heritage, consists of six members from both the West Virginia Air National Guard (WVANG), West Virginia Army National Guard (WVARNG) with assistance from civilians at Chambers College. It was established to assist officials with the tracking, procurement and distribution of in-demand medical supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), used across the state during COVID-19 response.

Once established, getting an accurate reading of the on-the-ground demand for both type and quantity of PPE needed by the various medical facilities, first responder and public safety agencies, and local health departments around the state was identified as one of the primary challenges the task force would face.

After the taskforce collected that initial data, the team then used models based on regional, state, and local information on current and expected spread of the disease, including data points such as population densities, healthcare bed capacities, and existing levels of available supplies, to forecast possible surge conditions should localized spikes or outbreaks happen.

Utilizing this data, officials in West Virginia can now order PPE and other medical supplies proactively to meet potential surge needs around the state, rather than reactively wait for a spike in cases to happen before fortifying local supply levels. Task Force Petersen also vets potential vendors and works to procure supplies to meet the forecasted demand.

Two soldiers in the Colorado National Guard saved a life April 14 while serving meals to those experiencing homelessness. Pfc. Harold Taylor, assigned to Joint Task Force Shelter Support at the Denver Rescue Mission, noticed someone choking.

"I could see the guest was having a tough time breathing, when suddenly the man made the universal choking sign of holding his hands around his neck," Taylor said. "So I quickly turned the man around and proceeded to give him the Heimlich maneuver but I wasn't able to dislodge the food."

Army Pfc. Harold Taylor and Spc. Jo England, communications operators, Colorado Army National Guard, serve food to the guests at the Denver Rescue Mission, April 20. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. John Rohrer)

Army Spc. Jo England, serving food alongside Taylor, noticed what was happening and moved to assist her teammate. Realizing the Heimlich maneuver wasn't working, England attempted another tactic, smacking the man's upper back to clear the blockage.

"I've seen health care workers at my full-time job do it before, and I'm CPR certified," she said. "So I knew where to hit him in order for it to have the most impact and dislodge the food."

Both fast-acting soldiers typically perform radio communications duties at their home unit, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, in Colorado Springs.

“I am so very proud of these soldiers for going above and beyond their duties to save the life of an individual experiencing homelessness in our city,” Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said. “They are living examples of the selfless dedication of the men and women serving in our Colorado National Guard.”

The New Mexico National Guard is helping support two alternate care facilities to keep New Mexico from exceeding its medical capacity during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

NMNG airmen and soldiers received, unloaded and inventoried a 250-bed federal medical shelter at the 150th Special Operations Wing hangar and began repackaging to support both a 50bed alternate care facility in Gallup and a 200-bed alternate care facility in Gibson.

The packages include everything to run a hospital, from cleaning gear to cots, IV equipment, walkers and oxygen. Beds are prepackaged with gown, bedsheet, pillow and blanket.

“Our soldiers and airmen have been working quickly and efficiently to get both these alternate care facilities up and running,” said Maj. Gen. Ken Nava, the adjutant general of New Mexico.

Current National Guard COVID-19 response missions include, but are not limited to:

- *Full-time, 24-hour state Emergency Operations Center staffing to synchronize National Guard efforts with local and state mission partners to plan and execute an effective response;
- *Flying ventilators and other critical equipment to support response efforts in other states;
- *Providing mortuary affairs assistance as needed with dignity and respect;
- *Providing time saving support to local law enforcement, freeing officers to perform their duty in the communities they serve;
- *Conducting force health protection assessments to ensure our Guardsmen are taken care of;
- *Manufacturing, sewing and distributing masks for mission essential personnel;
- *Building and outfitting alternate care facilities to alleviate stress on medical infrastructure;
- *Supporting warehouse operations and logistics efforts to help deliver and distribute lifesaving medical equipment and critical supplies;
- *Delivering and distributing food in hard-hit communities and supporting food banks;
- *Manning call centers to be a knowledgeable and calming voice;
- *Providing vital personal protective equipment training and delivery to civilian first responders;
- *Performing sample collection and delivery to medical personnel;
- *Providing support and symptoms screening to testing facilities and passenger terminals;

*Providing transportation and assessment support to healthcare providers

Here are the latest updates of National Guard actions across the United States and its territories:

Florida

The Florida National Guard has 2,903 soldiers and airmen in a mobilized status.

COVID-19 testing, both mobile and community-based testing sites, continues to be the main focus of the efforts, and has resulted in more than 86,850 completed tests.

Additionally, 93 FLNG medical professionals are supporting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' alternate care facility at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The facility consists of a 64-bed, COVID step-down medical facility. The facility could be built out to 450 beds with augmentation from contract professionals.

Georgia

The Georgia National Guard has deployed more than 2,500 members to support the state's COVID-19 response. Georgia Army National Guard soldiers are providing traffic management at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, which has been converted into a 200-bed alternate care facility.

Additionally, approximately 70 infection-control teams are disinfecting nursing homes, and 20 medical support teams are assisting hospital staff enabling them to focus on critical life-saving requirements. Hospital Entry Control Teams are also assisting hospitals by screening visitors at hospital entrances, as well as managing movement within facilities.

Teams specializing in infection control, medical support, hospital entry control, and testing collection are "purpose built" with capabilities generated in response to the public health state of emergency.

Guardsmen are packaging food items at 10 food banks, and delivering products to Georgians in need, from Dalton to Valdosta. Soldiers and airmen are also delivering food weekly to Atlanta Public School students while schools remain closed. This effort has resulted in the delivery of more 62,000 meals.

The GANG continues to partner with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Georgia Department of Health to provide the service, support, and direct action necessary to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

More than 200 Georgia National Guardsmen are assisting the Department of Public Health with testing citizens across the state. This new initiative includes 10 new mobile testing teams, also known as "strike teams." These teams will deploy to hot spots in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The GANG strike teams intend to test 1,500 citizens per day, and have the capability to increase testing based upon the availability of test kits.

Michigan

820 Michigan National Guard personnel are actively supporting the state's COVID-19 response. An additional 6,600 National Guard personnel are ready to assist.

National Guard personnel are supporting requests from our local communities and state agencies across 13 counties. Response missions include:

- *food distribution;
- *screening operations; reception and staging;
- *supply & logistics management;
- *state emergency operations center staff augmentation;
- *alternate care facility support

In addition, Joint Task Force – Michigan includes National Guard personnel to coordinate response efforts across the state.

New York

The New York National Guard has 3,627 airmen and soldiers on mission across the state. Members of the New York Guard (State Defense Force) and New York Naval Militia are also mobilized for the mission.

Six joint task forces are operating on Long Island, New York City, the Hudson Valley, Capital Region, Syracuse, and Buffalo to support state and local governments. A dual status command task force under the command of Brig. Gen. Michel Natali, the Assistant Adjutant General, Army, leads efforts to employ active and National Guard military resources in New York City.

The dual status command is supporting 2,700 military and civilian medical staff working at Javits and in New York City hospitals. Army soldiers of the 44th Medical Brigade are providing staffing at the Javits New York Medical Station.

Additional medical staff from the U.S. Army Reserve, the Navy Reserve, the Air Force, and the Civilian Medical Reserve Corps are also working at the alternate care site.

As of April 27, 1,093 patients have been treated at the Javits New York Medical Station. New York National Guard members continue to manage the Javits site as the unified command post for the multi-agency response.

New York Air National Guard pararescue airmen, who are trained as emergency medical technicians from New York's 106th Rescue Wing, are also civilian personnel in city hospitals.

The New York National Guard is supporting the alternate care facility at the South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island. Additional forces are providing support at three other potential alternate care sites on Long Island and in Westchester County.

The New York National Guard continues to support 10 drive-through testing sites. There were 4,896 tests conducted April 25.

Sites are located at:

- *SUNY Stony Brook;

- *Jones Beach State Park;

- *Staten Island, adjacent the Staten Island University Hospital;

- *Glen Island State Park in Westchester County;

- *The Anthony Wayne Service area in Rockland County;

- *Lehman College and the Bay Plaza Mall in the Bronx;

- *Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens

- *SUNY Albany in Albany.

Soldiers and airmen are collecting samples and providing general-purpose support at the testing locations.

National Guard personnel continue food packaging and distribution today in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Manhattan in New York City, and in Yonkers, providing 96,514 meals April 25. Soldiers have distributed 2,614,871 meals since beginning the mission.

Similar food distribution missions are underway in Westchester County but are on hold over the weekend. National Guard troops distributed 2,307 meals April 23, and have provided 82,490 meal packages since the start of the mission. In Albany County 2,432, meals have been delivered to quarantined residents, or picked up, as of April 23.

New York National Guard soldiers and airmen have been working at the regional food bank in Latham, N.Y. and have prepared 97 pallets of food for shipment across northeastern New York.

Soldiers helping to process and ship goods at the regional food bank in Schenectady, N.Y. delivered 1,711 meals as of April 23. A similar food distribution mission commenced in Chenango County April 21 and 2,804 meals have been distributed as of April 23. An additional food support mission was conducted April 24 in Amsterdam, Montgomery County, and 1,000 meals were distributed.

New York soldiers and airmen continue conducting logistics missions, including warehousing and commodity distribution of medical supplies at six sites in the Hudson Valley, the Albany area, and Mohawk Valley.

New York National Guard soldiers have distributed 3.8 million protective masks to five counties since the mission. At Stewart Air National Guard Base, soldiers working the warehouse mission delivered 338,000 gowns and 14,040 gallons of liquid soap April 25. 7,000 coveralls were delivered to SUNY Downstate Medical Center.

Soldiers are scheduled to deliver an additional 400,000 gowns, 4,000,000 masks and 25,225 pulse oximeters on April 26.

Hand sanitizer delivery to areas in the lower Hudson Valley is ongoing. On April 25, 253 gallons were dropped off at two locations in the lower Hudson Valley. A total of 48,906 gallons of sanitizer have been distributed since the start of the mission.

The New York National Guard continues to provide logistics support to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New York City.

There are 250 New York National Guard personnel working with members of the Medical Examiner's Office to assist in the dignified removal of human remains when required. Soldiers assigned to the active Army's 54th Quartermaster Company are also providing staff assistance to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner on New York City. Soldiers and airmen from a number of units are conducting this mission under the control of the 369th Sustainment Brigade.

The support mission also includes assistance to the counties of Westchester and Orange medical examiners.

Soldiers continue to man phones at two New York City call centers, including one for the New York City Division of Veterans Services. New York National Guard soldiers continue to provide administrative support at two New York City 911 call centers.

Soldiers continue packaging COVID-19 test kits for the New York State Department of Health at the Wadsworth Laboratory in Albany. They assembled more 33,500 kits April 25 for distribution across the state. The team has built 406,550 testing kits since starting the mission.

Virginia

The Virginia National Guard has more than 540 personnel supporting the commonwealth's COVID-19 response. Soldiers and airmen are supporting planning teams and assisting with logistics in multiple Virginia Department of Emergency Management regions, and personnel are staged across the state ready to respond.

Soldiers are delivering supplies and helping with logistics at food pantries in the Fredericksburg area, as well as assisting with logistics at testing sites in the Roanoke and New River Valley areas. Soldiers and airmen are working directly with the Virginia Department of Health, training to provide additional capacity and capabilities for testing efforts.

West Virginia

Currently, more than 700 members of the West Virginia National Guard are on duty supporting the state's COVID-19 response. To date, WVNG has completed 666 missions across the state. Members of the WVNG provided PPE training to the West Virginia State Police. They continue to assist with N95 mask fit testing in Beckley and Parkersburg. To date, this team has trained 658 stores, 3,152 personnel, and 67 medical or long-term care facilities.

West Virginia Guard personnel assisting in sanitization lanes for first responder and public transport vehicles, have sanitized 156 vehicles in two locations – Huntington and Charleston – which includes ambulances, police vehicles and public transport buses.

In addition to sanitization of vehicles, a team of Guard personnel from Task Force Innovation conducted a pilot sanitization test of HVAC ducts using aerosolized hydrogen peroxide, April 24, at the Woody Williams Military Flight Operations Center in Charleston. This team will test the Federal Aviation Administration building this week to refine the process and identify additional processes or procedures for larger scale implementation.

WVNG members sanitized a daycare facility in Teays Valley April 25. Additionally, this team conducted the first restaurant sanitization mission in Charleston, April 26.

Link <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/coronavirus/2020/04/27/latest-national-guard-covid-19-update-44500-troops-mobilized-with-83-percent-on-title-32-orders/>

— NOVEL CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 NATIONAL & WORLD—

9. In coronavirus battle, scientists have teamed up with billionaires for COVID-19 'Manhattan Project': report

Fox News by James Rogers/April 28

A small group of scientists and billionaires have teamed up in an ambitious effort to battle the coronavirus pandemic, The Wall Street Journal is reporting.

The group's work has been described as a COVID-19 "Manhattan Project," in a nod to the famous effort to develop the atomic bomb. It is led by 33-year-old physician-turned venture capitalist Thomas Cahill, according to the Journal.

A document written by the group, which calls itself "Scientists to Stop COVID-19," outlines their plan to tackle the pandemic.

Cahill, the managing partner at Boston-based life sciences venture capital firm Newpath Partners, has set up the eclectic group that includes Nobel Prize winner Michael Rosbash, a neuroscientist and professor of biology at Brandeis University.

Harvard chemistry and chemical biology professor Stuart Schreiber is also a member of the group. Like Rosbash, Schreiber is also a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator.

Cahill's connections, including billionaires Peter Thiel and Michael Milken, have given him the legitimacy to reach the officials at the heart of the coronavirus battle, The Wall Street Journal reports.

The Wall Street Journal reports that the group is acting as an "ad hoc review board" for the flood of coronavirus research, "weeding out" flawed research before it reaches policymakers. Over the past month, the group has frequently advised Nick Ayers, a longtime aide of Vice President Mike Pence, as well as agency heads, according to the Journal.

Pence is the head of the U.S. Coronavirus Task Force.

In their plan, which was obtained by the Journal, the scientists offer "four actionable, non-partisan proposals to produce safe and effective COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines in the shortest possible timeframe, and to reopen our society in a manner that reduces the risk of future COVID-19 outbreaks."

The plan is dated "March and April 2020."

The proposals include a first wave of therapies using existing drugs to establish a "beachhead" in the fight against the virus and a second wave of potent new antibody drugs developed specifically to neutralize COVID-19. The drugs, the group says, would "offer a promising combination of speed, safety, and likelihood of being effective."

A third wave of vaccines for long-term victory over the virus will offer seasonal or multiyear immunity to COVID-19, the plan says. The authors of the plan also say that the reopening of businesses and schools must use science-driven symptom reporting, virus testing, and personal protective gear to minimize future COVID-19 outbreaks and additional loss of life.

The group says that testing for the first wave of therapies should occur from April to May 2020, with use immediately afterward. Testing for the second wave of antibody drugs should take place from June to August 2020, with use immediately afterward, it adds.

The plan also calls for testing of the third wave of vaccines through March 2021, with use immediately afterward. The reopening of businesses and schools could be implemented from May to June 2020, with the measures the scientists advocate lasting until the threat has passed.

Fox News has reached out to Cahill and the White House with a request for comment on this story.

As of Tuesday morning, more than 3 million coronavirus cases have been diagnosed worldwide, at least 988,469 of which are in the U.S. The disease has accounted for at least 212,056 deaths around the world, including at least 56,253 people in the U.S.

Link: <https://www.foxnews.com/science/coronavirus-battle-scientists-have-teamed-up-with-billionaires-for-covid-19-manhattan-project-report>

10. Drones could help fight coronavirus by air-dropping medical supplies

CNN by Stephanie Bailey, CNN Business/April 28

London (CNN Business) - These are dangerous times for people with chronic health conditions. They often need to visit hospitals for treatment or to collect medication, but during the pandemic that means increased risk of exposure to coronavirus.

In Africa, a US startup says it is reducing that risk by using drones to deliver medical supplies to local clinics, and freeing up hospital beds in the process.

Zipline, based in San Francisco, has used drones to deliver blood and medical products to hospitals and health centers in Rwanda since 2016. Last year, it expanded to Ghana and now it wants to accelerate plans to begin deliveries in the United States.

Air Drop

Zipline has two distribution centers in Rwanda and four in Ghana, built to speed up the transport of medical supplies in areas with poor roads and a lack of refrigerated vehicles.

Doctors order products from their phones and drones make the deliveries within a 50-mile range, in an average of 30 minutes, according to Zipline. The drones can carry packages weighing almost 4 pounds (1.8 kilos) and drop them to a designated area on the ground using a simple paper parachute.

Zipline says that it has already delivered over 60,000 units of blood, critical medicines and vaccines for measles, polio and other diseases. Now the company is working with the governments of Rwanda and Ghana to support their coronavirus response efforts, explains Zipline co-founder and CEO Keller Rinaudo.

In Ghana, Zipline's distribution centers hold stocks of emergency personal protective equipment (PPE), allowing health authorities to target their distribution. It has also started delivering Covid-19 test samples from hospitals in rural Ghana to laboratories in the cities of Accra and Kumasi.

"We are stocking a whole bunch of Covid-19 products and delivering them to hospitals and health facilities, whenever they need them instantly," Rinaudo told CNN Business.

Vaccines and test kits will be added to Zipline's inventory when available.

Zipline says that delivering medical supplies to local clinics frees up hospital beds for coronavirus patients, because people with other health conditions can get treatment, such as blood transfusions for example, closer to home.

Rinaudo hopes the drones will soon be able to deliver directly to designated neighborhood drop-off points and even to people's homes.

"Suddenly there's a dramatic need to extend the reach of the hospital network and the healthcare system closer to where people live," said Rinaudo. "You can do that ... via instant delivery services."

Expanding to the US

Launched in 2016, Zipline is worth \$1.25 billion and has close to 300 employees, according to the company, with Goldman Sachs (FADXX) among its investors.

Rinaudo says global public health leaders have visited Zipline's African distribution centers to see how the technology could work in America. Zipline was already planning to launch in the United States later this year and is now hoping to provide coronavirus assistance there, too.

Access to specialty drugs for non-coronavirus patients can be a problem in rural US communities. Zipline hopes that by distributing products that would otherwise only be available at hospitals, it can protect patients and free up beds, just as it's doing in Africa.

It could also distribute test kits, PPE, and vaccines, once available.

Rinaudo explains that Zipline has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration for over a year to get its aircraft certified to fly in US commercial air space.

The company already has two distribution centers in California which it uses as test facilities, and they can immediately begin deliveries once its aircraft are certified.

"The good news is that there is technology like this available," said Rinaudo. "The US is falling behind and Covid-19 will be a good chance for us to step into the future and start building infrastructure for the 21st century."

Link: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/28/tech/zipline-drones-coronavirus-spc-intl/index.html>

11. Reopening states too early will bring deadlier outcomes, coronavirus projections show
CNN by Christina Maxouris/April 28

(CNN) - Seven coronavirus models show US coronavirus deaths will rise in coming weeks, but how sharply depends on how much "contact reduction" Americans practice, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The models estimate the numbers of cases and deaths on the state and national levels, and one model from the University of Texas at Austin makes metro-area projections.

"State-level forecasts vary widely, reflecting differences in early epidemic phases, timing of interventions and model-specific assumptions," the CDC says.

Models that factor in strong contact reduction suggest deaths will continue to occur, but will "slow substantially over the next four weeks," the CDC said.

"Conversely, models that do not incorporate as strong contact reductions ... suggest that total deaths may continue to rise quickly."

One model frequently cited by the White House coronavirus task force has upped its predicted death toll again, this time projecting 74,000 Americans will lose their lives to the virus by August.

The projection was adjusted because of longer peaks in some states and signs that people are becoming more active again, according to Dr. Chris Murray, director of the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Last week, the model projected 67,641 deaths from Covid-19.

States including Georgia, Texas, Michigan, Hawaii and Alaska have started reopening.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said his state is weeks away from changing its stay-at-home order -- yet beaches in the southern part of the state were packed with thousands of people over the weekend.

As of Tuesday morning, more than 990,100 people in the US have been infected, and more than 56,400 have died.

"It's a safer strategy to get the number of infections in the community down to a really low level, and then testing and contact tracing and isolation can work," Murray said Monday.

Georgia, which Murray's team warned shouldn't begin reopening until June 28, started reopening small businesses Friday.

Gov. Brian Kemp said Georgia is "moving forward with data and information and decisions from the local public health officials, meeting and working within the guidelines of the great plan that the President has laid out.

Under Trump's own proposal for states to reopen in phases, Georgia does not meet the "gating" criteria.

Among the guidelines for "Opening Up America Again," states shouldn't start to reopen until they have a downward trajectory of documented cases in a 14-day period or a downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests in a 14-day period.

"We didn't meet the full gating criteria, but we met several of them and we were approaching a plateauing, which made us feel that it would be safe to move forward because we had three things in place," said Dr. Kathleen Toomey, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health.

The select criteria, Toomey said, were adequate hospitalization, testing capacity and an increasing contact-tracing capacity.

As more governors start reopening their states and others set the date, they're pushing to get a better idea of how hard their state has been hit through antibody testing.

Experts warn there's still a lot researchers don't know about the accuracy of the tests, and the World Health Organization has cautioned that no evidence exists yet that antibodies prevent a second infection.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said he is encouraged that Covid-19 will respond well to a vaccine, once one is available, because there is evidence that patients "can mount a natural immune response," he said.

"There's no guarantee," he said, "but the fact that the body can do it gives me cautious optimism."

Hard-hit cities start testing asymptomatic people

Some cities and states will start testing residents who don't have symptoms to better understand how many people have been infected.

Los Angeles County will expand coronavirus testing Tuesday to include delivery drivers, rideshare drivers and taxi drivers -- even if they feel fine, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said.

"These are folks that are on the frontlines, helping us get to where we need to go, helping us have food delivered to our homes," he said.

In Boston, 1,000 asymptomatic residents will undergo diagnostic and antibody testing by Friday to evaluate exposure to the virus in the city, Mayor Martin Walsh said.

Starting Tuesday, Georgia public health workers will start visiting randomly selected homes in two of Georgia's largest counties to conduct antibody testing through blood samples. The program is voluntary.

In New York, about 15% of the 7,500 people who have been tested in the state's antibody study have tested positive, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Those tests are "not ready for prime time," a former acting director of the CDC told Stat, a health news website.

"As we learn whether that means you are protected in the future, there could be value in that," Dr. Richard Besser told Stat, but "the science isn't there yet to be able to say what those tests mean."

"I worry that people will get a false sense of security and they can change their behavior based on the results of that test, or have a false sense of concern if it's a test that isn't detecting protections that they may actually have."

Though it's unclear when New York City's schools will reopen, the city is adopting a special grading system to accommodate home learning and will stage a special citywide virtual graduation, Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

"You may not have the traditional ceremony that you were looking forward to, we're going to give you something you're going to remember for the rest of your life and you will cherish," he said.

States gear up to reopen in coming weeks

Meanwhile, some governors are moving forward with reopening their economies.

Missouri will start next week, with some statewide restrictions set to be lifted Monday, Gov. Mike Parson said Monday.

"Our plan is working, the health care system is not overwhelmed and we are winning the battle," the governor said.

Under the governor's plan, any business can reopen as long as 6 feet of social distancing can be maintained, and indoor retail businesses will have to limit their number of customers to no more than a quarter of their normal capacity.

In Kentucky, after the state started loosening restrictions for some health care services, the governor said the next phases of reopening will be announced week by week -- with more restrictions loosened weekly, starting May 11.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said he will allow his stay-at-home order for Texas to expire April 30. A new order will include an initial first phase of reopening that allows businesses such as retail stores, malls, restaurants and theaters to open Friday with 25% occupancy.

Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources intends to reopen 34 state parks, forests and recreational areas Friday with special conditions to minimize overcrowding and allow for social distancing, Gov. Tony Evers said.

Link: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/28/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html>

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