

New York state to ease virus lockdown but not Big Apple

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Some areas of New York—the state worst affected by America's coronavirus outbreak—will be allowed to gradually reopen later this week, but New York City will stay closed until at least June, leaders said Monday. © 2020 AFP

COVID-19 has killed around 22,000 people in New York state, which has been shut down since Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered all non-essential businesses ordered closed on March 22.

He said three regions had met criteria—including on declining [death rates](#), hospital beds and testing capacity—to restart construction, manufacturing and curbside retail when the order expires Friday.

"We start a new chapter today," Cuomo told reporters, adding, "It's an exciting new phase, we're all anxious to get back to work."

However, New York City, the epicenter of America's epidemic, will not be able to start getting its economy up and running again this month, Mayor Bill de Blasio told reporters.

He said data on deaths and hospitalizations was "definitely trending in the right direction" but needed to fall further before Big Apple residents could get back to work.

"We need to see it sustained in a deeper way. Right now, that takes us into June," de Blasio said.

The epidemic is in sharp decline in New York state, where Cuomo said 161 people had died in the past 24 hours, down from the single day high of 799 in early April.

Cuomo also announced that from Friday low-risk [recreational activities](#) such as tennis and drive-in cinemas would be permitted statewide.

The governor and mayor plan to reopen economies gradually to avoid a second wave of infections.

"We have to continue to be smart," said Cuomo.

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