



**GOVERNOR NORTHAM - COVID-19 BRIEFING  
FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2020**

**Major Takeaways**

- Still hoping Phase I will begin next Friday, May 15 unless the trends change.
- It will not be like turning on a light switch – it will be more like moving a dimmer switch up a notch
- Phase I will take a minimum of two weeks and will be based on health metrics
- No indication given as to whether an Executive Order would move us into Phase 1
- (From Q&A) Law enforcements agents are empowered. They’ve been good about giving warnings, but they do have ability to issue citations to those not obeying the guidelines.
  
- **Forward VA: PHASE 1 Guidelines**
  - Continue to telework if possible.
  - 10-person limit on gatherings remains.
  - Face coverings when out around other people.
  - “Stay at home” becomes “Safe at home” – especially if vulnerable
  - Keep up social distancing
  
- **What this means for the places you go:**
  - Non-essential retailers open with 50% regular capacity.
  - Restaurants or breweries will continue food and beverage takeout, curbside and delivery, plus during Phase I Businesses who have a permit for outdoor dining may open that area at 50% seating capacity.
  - Entertainment and public amusement venues will remain closed.
  - Fitness centers/gyms have been closed, but during Phase I we will allow outdoor classes with limitations.
  - Beaches still have limited use for exercise and fishing (includes State Parks).
  - Places of worship: Drive in services may continue and seating 50% indoor capacity.
  - Personal grooming businesses will open by appointment only with strict social distancing and masks required.
  - Private campgrounds open with restrictions on distance between campsites.
  - State parks will slowly open for tent-camping, RVs and then cabins (which will not open immediately). Ten-person limit for gatherings continues.
  - Overnight summer camps will remain closed in Phase I.
  - Some childcare centers have been open, prioritizing care for children of essential workers. That will continue during Phase I.
  - Ten-person limit on gatherings, wearing face coverings to protect others and yourself, social distancing and teleworking should continue.

## CASE INFORMATION

Total Cases: 22,342 (+2086 from 5/06)

People Hospitalized: 3059 (+286 from 5/6)

COVID-19-Linked Deaths: 812 (+99 from 5/6)

People Tested: 143,220 (+15,282 from 5/6)

Unique People Tested: 128,877 (+16,068 5/6)

### **Outbreaks COVID-19 Statewide: 260 (+16 from 5/6)**

- 150 (+7) outbreaks are in long-term care facilities (3,172 {+270} cases, 470 {+65} deaths)
- 62 (+8) in congregate settings (887{+97} cases, 15 (+2) deaths)
- 21 (+1) in a healthcare setting (102 (+16) cases, 0 deaths)
- 20 in correctional facilities (843 {+94} cases, 2 (+1) deaths)
- 7 cases in an educational setting (37 (+1) cases, 0 deaths)

### **VFC City Breakdown of Cases, Hospitalizations, Deaths Virginia Department of Health**

(Change since 5/6/20)

<u>CITY</u>	<u>Total Cases</u>	<u>Hospital-izations</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>Total Cases</u>	<u>Hospital-izations</u>	<u>Deaths</u>
Charlottesville	66 (+2)	12 (-1)	2	Newport News	144 (+11)	35	10 (+1)
Danville	39 (+2)	13	1	Norfolk	274 (+18)	50 (+9)	5 (+1)
Hampton	135 (+7)	28	3 (+2)	Petersburg	41 (+1)	15 (+1)	2
Harrisonburg	574 (+49)	33 (+2)	21 (+2)	Portsmouth	194 (+4)	37 (+1)	8
Hopewell	33 (+2)	11 (+1)	0	Richmond	494 (+56)	85 (+9)	18 (+2)
Lexington	5 (-1)	0	0	Staunton	15 (+2)	0	0
Lynchburg	68 (+3)	6 (+1)	1	Williamsburg	31 (+4)	8 (+1)	2 (+1)
Martinsville	2	1	0	Winchester	61 (+5)	2 (+1)	0

## Governor Northam's Briefing Notes: Friday, May 8, 2020

- Will outline Phase I for businesses and gatherings
- Will use charts and graphs (some available at VDH website) and others on Virginia.gov state website.
- Two months ago we were figuring out how to rearrange our lives, we closed schools, changed and closed some businesses and directed people to stay home.
  - Our health data shows us that it's working.
    - We have a steady supply of PPE for our health workers.
    - Will be testing 1,500 people on the Eastern Shore.
    - Have 325 contact tracers now and will hire 1,000.
    - These additional tools and data metrics are informing our decisions.
- Hoping Phase I will begin next Friday unless trends change. Our tools have changed, but our commitment has not. It will not be like turning on a light switch – it will be more like moving a dimmer switch up a notch.
- Virus still in our communities. Need to continue wearing masks, social distancing, and limiting gatherings to 10.
- When we move into **Phase I we will move deliberately forward and ease some restrictions**, but not all. Science, data and safety are our criteria.
- **Monitoring confirmed positive cases by date:**
  - Shows that testing has gone up because we're testing more people; the virus is still out there.
  - Monitoring how many being tested each day and both the number of tests and average tests trending upward for the most part. We will continue to do more testing in coming days.
  - Looking at the number of people tested and the number of positive results.
  - 14-day downward trend on percent of positive cases and it is trending downward, which is a good thing.
- Hospitals that report experiencing PPE shortages is down completely, with several days of **no reports of PPE shortages in hospitals.**
  - A large shipment arrived in Chicago yesterday so trucks full of PPE are coming from O'Hare.
- Hospital Beds capacity: **Hospitals are currently reporting they have enough capacity for a surge.**
  - Monitoring how many Covid-19 cases, how many other patients/staff and bed capacity. The number of those hospitalized shows we have capacity and we'll continue to monitor that as we go. has remained steady.
  - Covid patients in hospitals, how many in ICU, how many on ventilators, and those numbers remain flat. The rate of cases doubling has slowed to 16 days, which is another good indicator.

### Forward VA: PHASE 1 Guidelines

- Continue to telework if possible.
- 10-person limit on gatherings remains.

- Face coverings when out around other people.
- “Stay at home” becomes “Safe at home” – especially if vulnerable
- Keep up social distancing

### **What this means for the places you go:**

- Non-essential retailers open with 50% regular capacity.
- Restaurants or breweries will continue food and beverage takeout, curbside and delivery, plus during Phase I Businesses who have a permit for outdoor dining may open that area at 50% seating capacity.
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- Some childcare centers have been open, prioritizing care for children of essential workers. That will continue during Phase I.
- Ten-person limit on gatherings, wearing face coverings to protect others and yourself, social distancing and teleworking should continue.

Businesses will have questions, so go to [www.Virginia.gov](http://www.Virginia.gov) to read the guidelines posted there. Phase I will take a minimum of two weeks and will be based on health metrics.

Some communities may go slower, particularly in nova, where some communities may not feel they’re ready for Phase I. These guidelines are the FLOOR, and some localities may choose tighter restrictions.

If a business cannot meet the Phase I guidelines, no business is required to be open by the state. Businesses are reminded that **recovery will be consumer driven**. Please take precautions to protect everyone, including employees.

### **To our workers throughout Virginia:**

- We know there are people who want to go back to work, but also realize that some workers will not be ready to go back yet, and we have guidelines in place to protect them.
  - If you feel your workplace is unsafe report it to the Department of Labor and Industry.
  - Distancing and masks protect workers as much as customers.
- Yesterday, Governor asked our Congressional delegation to take steps for the federal government to provide more flexibility to states for unemployment coverage.
- Also working to find a way forward for those who have underlying health issues, more information on that as we enter Phase I (sometime next week).
- Want to reiterate that this virus is still with us. Our **next steps are dependent on data**. Unfortunately, there isn’t a cure or vaccine, so please continue to be careful, cover your face, stay 6 feet apart, and wash your hands.
- Our efforts have slowed the spread of the virus, but don’t let your guard down. Especially the elderly or those with underlying conditions.

- Virginians: take care of your health, see your physicians. Don't let illnesses or injuries go untreated.
- Dr. Deal, President of the Medical Society of Virginia:
  - The next phase of this plan is reliant on testing. For instance, how can a family doctor in Danville get a test? Lots of questions from providers. A **Covid-19 Testing Webinar was held this morning by Dr. Remley**. Your doctor's offices are safe. If you need to see a doctor then go, we are working to protect you. I am representing physicians, but many other health staff are dealing with this as well.
  - Act with your own health and **the health of others in mind**.

### Q&A

Q. How are you going to enforce Phase 1 restrictions?

A. Governor: The same way we've enforced the current restrictions. Law enforcements agents are empowered. They've been good about giving warnings, but they do have ability to issue citations to those not obeying the guidelines.

Q.If there is a surge in the data going forward, will the restrictions be reinstated? What metrics or benchmarks are you or will you follow to make that decision?

A. Governor: Yes, Absolutely, yes. We are using the same metrics that we've been using all along. There is no specific number or "ledge" at which they may reverse course. It's really a matter of the data/CDC guidelines.

Q. When are we going to get to 10,000 tests per day?

A. Dr. Remley: I can't give you an exact day, but hope it will be at the end of next week. We are making sure patients know where they can get a test, no matter where they come from; Getting the right combination of testing supplies, PPE, lab results is the key. We are slowing moving toward 10,000. Hope by end of next week it will be consistent 10,000.

Q. Unemployment numbers show U.S. unemployment is up 14.7%. What is your reaction to that and are Virginians getting the help and resources they need?

A. Dr. Meaghan Healy/Virginia Workforce: Over 500,000 have filed for unemployment in Virginia. Over 70,000 independent/gig workers have moved through the pandemic unemployment Virginia system. Those benefits to gig workers came out this week. Many people are receiving benefits. They have ramped up personnel for benefits, appeals, and the adjudication process.

Q. Can you talk about your decision to get to Phase 1 restrictions and our beaches, especially with Memorial Day being about two weeks away? Why is the bar for opening up beaches so high?

A. Governor: We want people to be able to return to our beaches. We know that the risk of spread of the virus ramps up when there are gatherings of more than 10 people. We have been working with municipalities, especially Virginia Beach, that has put out a very comprehensive plan that talks about distancing, education and enforcement for their beaches and community and a plan for safety at the beach. The bottom line is consumers need to feel comfortable that when they go back out to the beach that they are safe and that they will not contract the virus at the beach. We don't have a date in place yet. Today we are talking about Phase 1, hopefully starting May 15. Beaches will continue to be open for fishing and exercising, but not for other activities on the beach. When we are comfortable that the data is trending down and the comprehensive plan can be in place, we will ease the restrictions.

Q. Restaurants and gym owners were hopeful they would be able to open their doors in Phase 1, why are you allowing a lot of people into retails stores at 50% capacity and churches at every other pew

Why are restaurants and gyms kept outside the Phase 1 opening when retail, churches etc. have options?

A. Governor: We have discussed with restaurant owners, received their input, and collectively we've made that decision. We are not going to re-litigate that here. That is what we feel is in the best interest of Virginians, and the employees of those restaurants. If we continue to see numbers and data trend down then hopefully after two weeks we could go into Phase II that would allow patrons to dine inside restaurants (probably at 50% capacity).

Q. Why are you relying on the percent positivity rate? Why is this the metric?

A. Governor: We are not relying on one set of data more than the others. Except, the CDC guidelines are explicit that there be 14 days of percent positive cases trending down. We don't ignore the other metrics, but the CDC metric is key.

Q. People in long term care facilities benefit greatly with visitors. If they cannot have visitors, can they go home temporarily without losing their place/beds in the facility? Do you have specifics on people who have died from COVID-19 that did not have underlying conditions (otherwise healthy)?

A. Dr. Forlano – While we know it is difficult for a family, we think the restrictions need to stay in place. She does not have the information on underlying condition, but will check on it.

A. Governor Northam – Those with traumatic brain injuries and those with mental health issues in care facilities. Lot of them are there because they need 24 hour care that cannot be given at home. When it is possible they have tried to do that cannot go home more comfortable and safe at home is not always possible. In cases where it is possible, they have.

Q. Long term care facilities and naming of facilities and the prospect of a special session to change the Code of Virginia. Will you support?

A. Governor Northam: Let's talk about it. Let's "vet" it. He supports transparency and if we can all work together to ask those questions about how we can get more transparency, he would support that.

Q. How are you looking at the data? Hospitalizations were at a long time high yesterday

A. Hospitalizations with Covid patients that are on ventilators is going down or remained flat for the last few weeks.

Q. What if we get spikes and have to shut down Phase 1 and go back to where we are today?

A. Governor: It will be tough to go back once we ease restrictions and we know that. Our trends are headed in a good direction. This is not like flipping a switch to go back to our lives pre-COVID-19. It will be especially hard on our businesses. Our businesses on the task force have pleaded to please go slow so that they don't have to reverse. It's about people's health and well being.

Q. Rep. McEachin is proposing that investor-owned utility services not be cutoff. When there is a municipal utility, like in the case of Petersburg's water utility, could the state get involved in a local governments business to get customers hooked back up?

A. Governor: It shouldn't happen. People have to wash their hands and they can't do that without water. It is unacceptable and they've intervened on behalf of the individuals in Petersburg.

Q. Have you received any detailed requests from localities regarding stricter guidelines?

A. Clark Mercer, Chief of Staff: The Governor has articulated a set of rules for all of Virginia. They have heard from Northern Virginia localities. Their numbers are not looking as good as the rest of Virginia. We've asked them to review Phase 1 metrics. If they want to delay for a couple of weeks, they are open to letting them do that. They've spoken to bordering states and DC. Would not encourage one county to play by one set of rules and another county a different set of rules. It must be by region. It is a measured walk into reopening

Q. Have you heard from Richmond or the Eastern Shore regarding moving off of the Phase 1 restrictions?

A. As a region, Northern Virginia has coalesced. Richmond has diverse counties surrounding it, with diverse opinions.

Governor: Thank you for following the guidelines and bending the curve. Thank you to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. Thank you to businesses for your understanding. We know you want to get back to where you were. To Virginians, the consumers that want to get back into businesses, please start thinking about what you need to feel comfortable about going back in these businesses.

**Next briefing – Monday, May 11th**