

Western New York now in phase 2 of reopening

As expected, Western New York entered into phase two of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's "New York Forward" reopening process on Tuesday.

- Phase two includes:
- ✓ All office-based jobs
 - ✓ Real estate services
 - ✓ Retail – in-store shopping
 - ✓ Retail rental, repair and cleaning
 - ✓ Commercial building management
 - ✓ Limited barbershop and hair salon services
 - ✓ Vehicle sales, leases and rentals

In a Tuesday morning press conference, Cuomo said, "If you look at the progress we have made in New York, it's breathtaking how far and how fast we've come. We have more good news today – the number of hospitalizations is down, the number of new COVID cases walking in the door is at an all-time low and the number of deaths is just about as low as we have seen it. As the numbers continue to decline, Western New York is now ready to begin phase two of reopening."

Each region in New York has to continue to meet the seven "Regional UnPause Dashboard" metrics outlined by Cuomo, which he took from the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization. These indicators include hospitalization rate, COVID-19-related deaths, and virus contact tracing capability.

Dr. Samir Bhatt, senior lecturer (associate professor) in geostatistics, the department of infectious disease epidemiology, Imperial College London, said, "As the Western New York and Capital regions begin to move from phase one to phase two, the state's metrics provide a comprehensive view for tracking and controlling the disease. We will continue to monitor these data closely in order to make sure the next phase is implemented in a manner that balances public health and economic activity."

Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said, "As the next two regions in New York state have been given the green light to begin to move from phase one to phase two, the state's new early warning dashboard will help to mitigate any problems that arise. It is critical to continue to move forward based on data and New York state is doing just that."

Once a region enters a phase, a two-week period of maintaining the metrics is required before a location can enter into the next stage. Western New York entered phase one on Tuesday, May 19.

This region's reopening "control

room" is headed by Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul and includes Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz and Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysch.

What Industries Need to Do

Speaking on LCTV Monday afternoon, Wydysch said, "You're going to have to complete a safety checklist online for the state and affirm that you have that safety plan in place and agree to follow it. You'll also want to make sure that you print that affirmation out along with your safety protocols. Have it on hand at your business for not only your employees, but for the clientele who come in, as well. You want to show that you have followed that procedure – that you are meeting all of the governor's mandates, and that is, again, mandatory for reopening; so please make sure that you're following all of those steps."

Speaking online to reporters Monday afternoon, Poloncarz said, "If you are a business that is included in the phase two industries, you have to file an attestation with New York state that you have a safety plan in place."

Poloncarz encouraged phase two companies to visit <https://forward.ny.gov>.

"You need to download the template that's available, so that you can have a safety plan in place, and then you need to do the attestation with New York state before you can open," he said. "And that includes professional services like law firms, accounting firms; we know dentists can open now; retail can have less capacity, but they can open up so that you can have people walk in and purchase in-store now; administrative support; real estate; rental and leasing; and then barbers and salons."

What ISN'T Opening

"New York Forward" stated, "Pursuant to the governor's executive orders, the following businesses remain closed:

"Malls; specifically, any indoor common portions of retail shopping malls with 100,000 or more square feet of retail space available for lease; however, any stores located within shopping malls, which have their own external entrances open to the public, separate from

Phase 2 Reopening of Businesses

<p>All office-based jobs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Services • Administrative Support • Information Technology <p>Retail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-store Shopping • Rental, Repair, and Cleaning 	<p>Real estate services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and Property Management • Leasing, Rental, and Sales Services • Barbershops and Hair Salons (limited services) • Motor Vehicle Leasing, Rental, and Sales
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STAY HOME. STOP THE SPREAD. SAVE LIVES.

Image courtesy of the Office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

the general mall entrance (e.g. strip malls), may open;

"Dine-in and on-premise restaurant or bar service, excluding take-out or delivery for off-premise consumption (though this was since modified to allow outdoor seating);

"Large gathering/event venues, including but not limited to establishments that host concerts, conferences, or other in-person performances or presentations in front of an in-person audience;

"Gyms, fitness centers, and exercise classes, except for remote or streaming services;

"Video lottery and casino gaming facilities;

"Movie theaters, except drive-ins; and

"Places of public amusement, whether indoors or outdoors, including but not limited to, locations with amusement rides, carnivals, amusement parks, water parks, aquariums, zoos, arcades, fairs, children's play centers, funplexes, theme parks, bowling alleys, family and children's attractions."

What's Next?

Wednesday on LCTV, Wydysch posed that very question.

"So, where does that leave us?" she said. "I know we have a lot of questions. Are libraries open? Yes, but with limitations. Dentists? Yes; those are all open statewide.

"But remember, just because something was allowed to open in phase two, it doesn't mean that it did. And certainly, for many reasons. Some businesses were not ready to meet their safety plan yet; maybe it didn't make economic

the type of transaction that you're looking to do.

"Many people assumed DMVs were open when we hit phase two (Tuesday) and just began showing up. Unfortunately, they were disappointed to find the doors still closed and had to then call. So, again, we ask: Please call ahead; make sure that where you're heading is open; and find out what restrictions might be in place.

"According to New York state, DMV offices should be part of the phase three opening, which will likely happen in about two weeks."

Wydysch also touched on U.S.-Canadian borders, which play a big part in Niagara County's economy.

"Now that we're on the verge of reopening and more into that process, one big question for many people in businesses is what's happening at the border," she said. "We know that, currently, that border into Canada is closed, except for essential travel. The president extended that closing through June 21.

"I want everyone to know that I'll be a part of a binational video conference happening this Friday, and we'll be discussing many of these issues that are coming up that we can foresee with our businesses, and how that reopening process might happen; what to expect with different businesses on this side of the border and the other side, as well. We'll have key leaders from Niagara County, Niagara Falls, and, of course the Canadian officials, as well.

"If you were interested in watching that, you can go to our county's Facebook page, and there is information on how to sign up to watch that webinar, if you would like to."

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