

# Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. issue shelter-in-place orders

Dmitri Church  
1 April 2020

In quick succession on Monday, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. issued stay at home orders for residents in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus in the US capital region. According to the orders, residents of the three jurisdictions will be allowed to leave their homes for food, medicine or medical assistance.

While Virginia's Governor Ralph Northam and Washington, D.C.'s Mayor Muriel Bowser—both Democrats—would not discuss the predictions made by current models for the region, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, a Republican, said that within weeks scenes in the region could resemble the social catastrophe that has befallen the New York City area, which has more than 40,000 known cases.

"In two weeks' time," Hogan said, "the DC, Maryland, and Virginia areas could look like New York and the tri-state area."

COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in the United States with New York City becoming the global epicenter of the virus in recent days with over 75,000 cases in New York and over 18,000 in New Jersey as of Tuesday. This has led to a complete shutdown of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut tri-state area, with the CDC directing anyone traveling out of the region to self-quarantine for 14 days.

As of Tuesday evening, there were 1,660 confirmed cases in Maryland, 495 in Washington, D.C. and 1,250 in Virginia. The number of deaths stands at 62 throughout the region. An outbreak of the virus in a Carroll County nursing home north of Baltimore infected 77 residents and 27 members of the staff.

The shelter-in-place orders affect over 15 million people throughout the region. Violations can lead to misdemeanor convictions, fines ranging from \$2,500 in Virginia and \$5,000 in Maryland and D.C., and jail

time of up to a year in Maryland and Virginia and ninety days in Washington. State parks and campsites are closed at night. Beaches are closed for all but fishing and personal exercise. In Maryland, religious establishments have been deemed "nonessential," ending on-site worship for an extended period.

While not yet part of the official decree, Hogan cautioned Maryland residents not to leave the state unless it was "absolutely necessary," including for business travel.

The directives follow orders earlier in March closing nonessential businesses. It also follows an announcement on Sunday that President Donald Trump approved a "major disaster declaration" for the District of Columbia, freeing up federal funding to be funneled to the area.

In their remarks, the state and district leaders took to chastising residents for not following earlier guidelines on avoiding leaving the house for nonessential reasons, blaming the spread of the virus on those who decided to ignore them.

All three leaders emphatically stated that testing remains limited to those with a referral from a doctor, despite the fact that a significant share of those who are infected with the novel coronavirus do not show any symptoms and can easily spread it to others.

Maryland Deputy Secretary of Health Frances Phillips said that the state is setting up new testing centers at vehicle inspection stations, but it will be "very limited testing" for "at risk people with symptoms of disease who will not be tested in emergency rooms or crowded physicians' offices." Officials for DC and Virginia also emphasized the limited availability of testing.

As in the rest of the United States, the measures being taken by Maryland, DC, and Virginia are wholly

inadequate to the scale of the crisis. Absent from Hogan, Northam or Bowser's bans were fines against large employers such as Amazon, United Parcel Service and FedEx, logistics corporations who have ruthlessly forced their employees to remain at job sites where known cases of COVID-19 have emerged.

Amazon alone operates eleven facilities between Maryland and Virginia, employing thousands of workers. Interviews with warehouse workers have revealed that Amazon workers still face extremely unsafe conditions, working shoulder to shoulder, and that Amazon is still fulfilling orders of clearly nonessential items to maintain profits at the expense of their workforce.

In addition to exempting major corporate offenders, Hogan also explicitly mentioned the importance of keeping open the NSA, headquartered at Fort Meade in Maryland. Much of the work done by the NSA is required to be done on site by US secrecy regulations, and one person at Fort Meade has already tested positive.

No mention was made of any extra measures taken to protect the doctors, scientists and other workers at the National Institute of Health or the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, both of which are headquartered in Maryland and have been conducting critical work to find a vaccine for the coronavirus.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**