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CONTINUING CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

Drive-thru testing at arena starts Monday



SEAN MOKAS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Crews set up concrete barricades for a temporary COVID-19 testing site at Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre Twp. on Saturday.

BY MICHAEL P. BUFFER
STAFF WRITER

The state Department of Health will begin operating a mass, drive-thru testing site for COVID-19 on Monday in the parking lot of Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre Twp.

It will provide testing for symptomatic first responders, health care workers and residents 65 or older throughout Northeast Pennsylvania, the state announced Saturday.

From noon to 4 p.m. Monday, the site will open to test 100 first responders and health care workers from Northeast Pennsylvania who have COVID-19 symptoms, Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said.

Beginning Tuesday, the site will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily to test up to 200 Northeast Pennsylvania residents over 65, first responders and health care workers each day.

"We are taking every precaution to safely provide this critical public health service and prevent the spread of COVID-19," Levine said. "People are required to stay in their cars to get tested and drive directly back onto the highway to return home."

Patients do not need a doctor's prescription to be tested at the drive-thru site. Registration is required one day in advance and can be found on the Department of Health's website, health.pa.gov.

On-site registration is not available. Patients also won't be able to register by making a phone call.

Each account needs a unique email address to register and get results. Patients will receive an email to log onto the registration site to access test results.

Registration can be done on a smartphone, tablet or computer. Patients are required to bring email confirmation of their appointments to the site.

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WARREN ALGA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A woman walks down Wyoming Street on Wednesday wearing a mask to protect against COVID-19.

Luzerne Co. adds 1 death, 44 new COVID-19 cases

BY MICHAEL P. BUFFER
STAFF WRITER

One more person has died, and another 44 COVID-19 cases have been documented in Luzerne County, according to the state Department of Health.

The department reported 1,712 cases and 32 deaths in the county on Saturday morning, up from 1,668 cases with 31 deaths that had been recorded a day earlier.

Health department statistics show the additional death involved a patient at a nursing home or personal care home. A total of 12 facilities in the county have so far had 155 resident infections, 15 staff member infections and 24 deaths. The statistics from Friday showed 138 resident infections, 14 staff member infections and 23 deaths.

The department on Saturday reported 1,628 additional positive cases of COVID-19 statewide, bringing the statewide total to 31,069. The department also reported 80 new deaths among positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 836.

"COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to rise in Pennsylvania, and even though the daily increases are not exponential, now is not the time to become complacent," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said.

Please see **CASES**, Page A7

Workers at risk



SEAN MOKAS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rev. Wayne Lupole, Brookhill, carries bagged lunches to his car to be delivered to members of the Southside Fire Station in Hazleton.



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Dennis Ferrell, a coal miner of 15 years, watches over conveyor belts carrying coal out of the Sally Ann 1 mine in Welch, W.Va.

Parallels drawn from King Coal to COVID-19 crisis

BY KENT JACKSON
STAFF WRITER

From times of King Coal to COVID-19, workers in the Hazleton area have faced dangers on the job.

In the previous century, mining was among the riskiest occupations, but Hazleton miners dug coal that helped power the nation's expansion.

During the pandemic, workers at a nursing home or personal care home are getting food to stores and packages to shoppers' doorsteps while facing

exposure to COVID-19. Across the country, the disease has struck hard on Latinos and African-Americans, who are more likely to work service jobs that cannot be done from home and to have underlying conditions that heighten their susceptibility.

"Where there is risk, the most vulnerable populations get exposed to it the most or get exposed to it first," Jamie Longazel, a Hazleton native and college professor who compared coal barons of yesteryear

with corporate employers of today in his 2016 book, "Undocumented Pears."

The churn of workers through industrial parks in the Hazleton area makes Longazel recall the coal industry of the past.

"They just need the product to move. That characterized the coal industry. It was the lives of workers. They knew that mines were going to close in, that Black Lung was real. They did that without care or sympathy for what they were putting

workers through," he said.

Pandemic also brought out shortcomings in the nation's healthcare system, from the scarcity of masks and protective equipment for medical workers to care for uninsured patients.

"You can so clearly see why healthcare should not be a for-profit industry when life-saving gear is offered to the highest bidder during a crisis of this magnitude," he said.

Please see **DANGERS**, Page A7

States team up on reopening

BY GEOFF MULVINILL
ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump, in a roller-coaster week of reversals and contradictions, told governors to "call your own shots" on lifting stay-at-home orders once the coronavirus threat subsides. But then he took to Twitter to push some to reopen their economies quickly and tell them it was their job to ramp up testing.

"This is mayhem," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Friday. "We need a coordinated approach between the federal government and the states."

In the absence of one, Cuomo and 16 other governors representing half the



JOHN MINGOLLO / ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a news conference in New York.

nation's population have organized three separate clusters of states each committed to working together on the details of relaunching businesses, schools and events while avoiding a

resurgence of infections.

The pacts have formed among states mostly with Democratic governors on the West Coast, around the Great

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DEATHS A2

Joyce Ann Hoag
Richard Garbacik
Mildred Adams

WEATHER

Partly Sunny
High of 58
A7

Yoselin Cuello
Hazleton

HAZLETON TODAY

Weather forecast for Hazleton today: 38 at 8 a.m., 53 at noon, 58 at 4 p.m. Precip chance 15%, Humidity 65%, Winds SW 7-14 mph.

EXTENDED FORECAST

Extended forecast for Monday through Friday. Monday: 54-36, Tuesday: 55-26, Wednesday: 47-33, Thursday: 57-47, Friday: 58-43.

NATIONAL WEATHER

National weather map showing pressure systems and precipitation across the United States. Includes a legend for weather symbols and a link to AccuWeather.

Map of the Hazleton area with weather icons for various locations like Binghamton, Scranton, and Wilkes-Barre.

RIVER GAUGES table listing water levels for Delaware, Calloway, Port Jervis, and other locations.

JERSEY SHORE FORECAST: Sunlight mixing with clouds today. Wind from the south-southwest at 12-20 mph.

ALMANAC: Recorded for the 24 hours through 4 p.m. yesterday at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Int'l Airport. Includes temperature and precipitation data.

AIR QUALITY INDEX: The presence of man-made particulates affecting aspects of human health. Includes a scale from 0 to 500.

SUN AND MOON: Today's sunrise and sunset times, moonrise and moonset, and planetary positions.

NATIONAL CITIES: Table of weather forecasts for major cities like Albany, Anchorage, Atlanta, and others.

PRECIPITATION: 24-hour precip. ending 4 p.m. Saturday: 0.43". Includes a monthly and yearly precipitation chart.

UV INDEX TODAY: The higher the AccuWeather UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection. Includes a UV index scale.

IN THE SKY: In the sky tonight in full swing. Includes a star chart for the night of April 22.

TESTING: Officers will direct traffic back to highway

FROM PAGE A1
The state prefers printed copies of registration. But patients can show their registration on smartphones or devices.
When you travel to the site, you will be directed from the highway to the parking lot of the arena, Levine said.

Road closures around Mohegan Sun Arena

STAFF REPORT
Road closures will be put in place around Mohegan Sun Arena as a COVID-19 testing site opens at the venue Monday.
In a post to its Facebook page, the Wilkes-Barre Twp. Police Department announced that PennDOT will be closing Highland Park Boulevard between Mundy Street and the Interstate 81 connector ramp from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. daily, beginning Monday.

individuals with pre-authorization to Mohegan Sun Arena's parking lot.
While the closures are in place, Highland Park Boulevard will be accessible only from I-81's Exit 168. Travel won't be allowed between Highland Park Boulevard and Mundy Street, or beyond the connector ramp near Walmart. Vehicles using Exit 168 will only be able to turn right on Highland Park Boulevard toward the arena, and vehicles leaving Concentra of the arena must turn left toward I-81.
Road closures will occur six days a week and will go on for approximately 30 days, the Wilkes-Barre Twp. Police Department's post stated.

the state to operate the mass COVID-19 testing site in the parking lot of Mohegan Sun Arena. The contract calls for the state to reimburse the county \$3,400 per month to cover the costs of electricity at the facility.
The term of the agreement lasts until May 31, and it includes the possibility of five one-month extensions if the state's emergency declaration remains in effect, officials said. The site will cap testing at 250 people per day.
State health officials announced Wednesday they decided the arena would be an ideal testing location. That resulted in criticism from some leaders, including Wilkes-Barre Twp. Mayor Carl Kuren, who expressed concern about sick people shopping at nearby retail outlets.
State Sen. John Yudichak, I-R, Scrantonville, blasted state authorities for failing to consult the mayor and accused the health department of an inadequate response. State Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski, D-121, Wilkes-Barre, also called on the health department to find an alternate location for the facility, citing the concerns of local leaders.
Contact the writer: mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

CASES: Death totals rise in Carbon, Schuylkill

FROM PAGE A1
Carbon County saw an increase of 18 positive cases and one new death to bring its total to 136 positive cases and eight deaths. Schuylkill County saw an increase of 10 positive cases and one new death on Saturday, bringing its totals to 254 cases and five deaths. The department also reported 1,411 negative tests in Schuylkill.
Statewide, 122,806 patients have tested negative to date. Of the patients who have tested positive to date, 39% are ages 25-49, 28% are 50-64, and nearly 24% are 65 or older.
Most of the patients hospitalized are aged 65 or older, and most of the deaths have occurred in patients 65 or older. There have been no pediatric deaths to date.
In nursing and personal care homes, the state reported 4,185 resident cases of COVID-19 and 462 cases among employees, at 347 distinct facilities in 35 counties. The state reported 492 cases have occurred in residents from nursing or personal care facilities.
All non-life-sustaining businesses are ordered to be closed and schools are closed statewide through the remainder of the academic year. The entire state remains under a stay-at-home order.
Contact the writer: mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

DANGERS: Current pandemic bears similarities to mining history

FROM PAGE A1
"Someone should not have to die because they're poor or their health insurance plan is not as good as their neighbor's," Longazel said. "That conversation has picked up as of late."
University of Maryland Professor Paul Shackel, who has done archaeological digs at old mining towns around Hazleton since 2010, said many workers in the industrial parks are hired through job agencies and don't receive health insurance or sick leave.
"The COVID-19 pandemic brings to light some similarities between contemporary labor rights and labor history associated with anthracite coal mining," said Shackel, who wrote, "Remembering Lattimer: Labor Migration and Race in Pennsylvania Anthracite Country" in 2018. "The lack of labor rights cost the mine workers in terms of their general health and in many cases their lives. This same situation is evident today, where businesses will compromise workers' rights for profit."
"New working class"
Amazon.com, which has a distribution center in Hum-boldt Industrial Park near

the population but 33% of patients.
The study only had race or ethnicity data for 580 patients, and the authors said the potential impact of the disease on race needs to be confirmed with more data.
Case figures by race weren't reported widely early in the pandemic in the United States, but the study's findings fit with results from other areas, including Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. African-Americans there account for 26% of residents but 81% of deaths from COVID-19. Propublica reported on April 3.
Pennsylvania's Department of Health began providing racial information on some patients on Thursday. African-Americans made up 32.3% of patients but only 12% of all Pennsylvanians.
The department did not provide information on Latinos or Latinos.
"Latinx populations are disproportionately impacted because of structural racism. That's it," Sirry Alang, assistant professor of sociology, and health, medicine and society at Lehigh University, said in an email. "There is nothing in their blood or bodies that make them more likely to

be impacted, but there is a lot about how our society shapes our health that is making people of color disproportionately affected."
Unequal schools, graduation and employment rates mean Hispanics are more likely to work in service jobs that they cannot do from home.
Living paycheck to paycheck makes buying large orders of groceries difficult so families shop often and face more stress.
Most Hispanic families, Alang said, have one breadwinner, who weighs a dilemma.
"If they take off from work, they don't get paid. They work. Their job then exposes the rest of the family," she said.
Even poor housing conditions, such as exposure to lead, can give rise to high blood pressure, heart and kidney disease, and complicate COVID-19, Alang said.
Longazel, who teaches political science at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, part of City University of New York, said a lot of his students "are in the thick of it and struggling."
"Whenever you bring race into the equation," Longazel said, "you see how race has segregated our cities. What parts

of cities do people have room to isolate and what parts do they not?"
"Essential" irony
Francisco Torres Aranda Jr., an area business owner and member of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs, said testing identified Hazleton as a hotspot for COVID-19. Then community members alerted the Governor's Office to the apparent connection between cases and large, essential businesses in industrial parks. State Health Secretary Rachel Levine next on April 6 created stricter standards for disinfecting plants with 50,000 square feet or more and keeping employees spread out.
The Cargill meat packing plant in Humboldt where 164 workers tested positive for the disease closed temporarily on April 7.
"Perhaps what we saw in Hazleton will serve as a guide to (the) nation, as many COVID spikes have now been found in rural America near industrial parks," Torres Aranda said in an email.
COVID-19 also brought racial tensions.
"It was apparent by some social media posts that some were blaming the arrival of the global pandemic to

tion on the Latino community," he said. "The fact is that this virus has managed to spread to every state on Earth, every state in the USA and every county in our state, and no one group has the fault of its spread."
Many people got sick just by reporting to work in cramped quarters or riding to jobs in tightly packed vehicles.
"It seems especially egregious," Torres Aranda said, "that many of the people being blamed for spreading the virus were in fact working at essential plants, in many cases ensuring our food supply and the delivery of essential items."
Contact the writer: hickman@citizensvoice.com; 570-501-3587
BIRTHDAYS
■ Jayco Chicalose, son of Michael and Jamie Chicalose, Oakmont, Ariz., ninth, today. He is a student at Freeland Elementary/Middle School and is a member of Cub Scout Pack 63. Drums. An escape room/cup caking decorating party will be held at his house with family in his honor.
■ Denise Rodgers, Hazleton, today.