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Maine reports first case of COVID-19

Gov. Mills advises postponing gatherings

BY CAITLIN ANDREWS AND MICHAEL SHEPHERD
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — Maine Gov. Janet Mills on Thursday recommended postponing gatherings of more than 250 people for at least 30 days after announcing the state's first presumptive positive test for the new coronavirus in a woman in Androscoggin County.

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Maine community colleges, Husson to extend spring breaks
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K-12 school cancellations are not being recommended at this time.

She also announced that she was declaring an insurance emergency aimed at forcing private insurers to cover coronavirus testing and associated costs including doctor visits and copays. The largest insurers in the state are already doing that. Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew said the department is also working with hos-



ROBERT F. BUKATY | AP

Gov. Janet Mills announces that one person has tested positive for coronavirus in Maine, during a news conference at the State House in Augusta on Thursday. At right is Dr. Nirav Shah, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Woman tests presumptive positive at Lewiston hospital

BY CHARLES EICHACKER
BDN STAFF

The first Maine person to test positive for the new coronavirus that has infected more than 1,000 across the U.S. and killed more than two dozen in the country is a Navy reservist who traveled for that role in a country where the virus is widespread, health officials said Thursday.

The COVID-19 virus was detected in a woman in her 50s in Androscoggin County, Gov. Janet Mills announced at a Thursday news conference. The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention is now in communication with her and her medical provider, and she has been quarantined at home.

The Maine CDC received the woman's presumptive positive test result around 11 a.m. Thursday, according to the agency's director, Dr. Nirav Shah. A presumptive positive test means that a state test came back positive, but has not been confirmed by a federal lab.

"She is not hospitalized," Shah said.

Investigators from the Maine CDC are now working with the woman to determine where she has traveled and how much contact she has had with other people. Maine CDC spokesman Robert Long said the Navy reservist had traveled on a mission to a country where the virus has spread.

Long did not name the country and said it is unclear how many people traveled with the person. The U.S. Navy released a statement saying other people "the individual immediately identified having close contact with have been notified and are in self-isolation at their residence."

The woman came into Central Maine Medical Center's emergency department in Lewiston on Tuesday and was tested, said Central Maine Healthcare spokeswoman Kate Carlisle. Central Maine
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pitals and clinics to ensure the under-insured and uninsured have access to testing.

The governor said the state has a "unique window" to delay a bigger outbreak and minimize exposure by practicing social distancing. Maine's move follows similar ones in other states. Washington has banned gatherings of more than 250 people in certain counties while California has issued a statewide ban.

"I've taken this step not lightly, but with the hope that it will prevent the need for the sorts of mandates we're seeing in other states," Mills said, saying the goal is to delay an outbreak for as long as possible in order to reduce strain on the health care system.

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CENTRAL MAINE HEALTHCARE

An Androscoggin County woman went to Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston on Tuesday and tested presumptive positive for coronavirus.

Life will change, but 'panic is never a good idea'

BY JESSICA PIPER
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — Maine recorded its first positive test for the new coronavirus on Thursday amid a flurry of cancellations that upended daily life for much of the state.

On Thursday, Gov. Janet Mills recommended the cancellation of events with more than 250 people, issued nonessential travel restrictions for state employees, announced emergency measures to force insurance companies to cover coronavirus tests. Meanwhile, more colleges moved to remote classes and extended spring breaks, and UMaine ended its sports season.

The rush of changes seemed to hit quickly in Maine, which had been one of only a few states to

Outdoors

UMaine cancels Sportsmen's Show
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State bicentennial event canceled
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have avoided coronavirus so far.

"I don't want to be dramatic," said Courtney Sanders, who runs Daily Soup in downtown Belfast. "I've been afraid of coronavirus for weeks, but I feel that it just hit today."

But state officials and public health experts are urging calm



NICK SAMBIDES JR. | BDN

Chris Vincenty (left), owner of Reel Pizza Bar Harbor, chats up a customer while Zack Smart is visible through the kitchen door making pizza on Thursday.

— and so-called "social distancing" — as the state prepares to address the deadly virus.

Peter Millard, an infectious disease epidemiologist and family physician at Seaport Community Health Center in Belfast, said Mainers should be prepared

to change their lifestyles "at least until we have a better idea of where things are going." Those changes, he said, should be avoiding crowds and maintaining especially good hygiene.

"To be cautious is a good idea,"
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Travel bans, market chaos as world reacts to virus spread

BY STAN CHOE, LORI HINNANT AND TIM SULLIVAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Sweeping travel bans cascaded around the globe Thursday, walling off countries and even entire continents, keeping people inside their homes, and slowing the engines of commerce to stem the coronavirus pandemic. Markets collapsed worldwide with the growing realization that there would be no fast end to the uncertainty.

The escalating crisis sent U.S. stocks to their worst losses since the Black Monday crash of 1987, extending a sell-off that wiped out most of Wall Street's big run-up since President Donald Trump's inauguration.

After weeks downplaying the virus, Trump's announcement of strict rules barring most Europeans from entry came as a shock
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Sports

NCAA basketball tournament canceled
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LINDA COAN O'KRESIK | BDN

Kelcey Thornton (right), a senior at the University of Maine, gets help from her friend Georgia Baber as she moves her belongings out of Oak Hall on the Orono campus Thursday afternoon. The University of Maine System will transition to remote instruction for classes on all campuses for the remainder of the semester, effective March 23. Baber is driving Thornton home to her parents' home in Readfield, where she will stay. Story on Page B1.

Maine's virus protocol for K-12 schools different from public universities — so far

BY EESHA PENDHARKAR
BDN STAFF

Even though public school districts across Maine are monitoring the coronavirus situation as it unfolds, the response of K-12 schools differs greatly compared with that of several universities and colleges in Maine. Education for students from kindergarten through 12th grade is mandated by law, and far fewer students in grades K-12 travel out of state as frequently as university students, according to school superintendents.

On Tuesday, the state's public university system announced an upcoming transition to remote instruction and asked students to leave campus
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Bangor-area high schools cancel large gatherings
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