

Reopening Snapshot May 7, 2020

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Georgia Snapshot

Georgia was among the first of several southern states to begin the reopening process at the end of April. Its stay-at-home orders, originally implemented on April 3rd, 2020, expired at the end of the month.¹

As early as April 27th, restaurants were allowed to reopen as long as they followed the set of 39 guidelines laid down by the Gov. Brian Kemp, a Republican.² The governor pushed forth with his decision to reopen large sectors of Georgia's economy even as he received criticism from President Trump, whose stance of lifting state restrictions has at-times been murky.

At this juncture, gyms, restaurants, bowling alleys, and nail salons, for example, are among some of the nation's first non-essential businesses to reopen.

However, Gov. Kemp acknowledged the lingering threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, saying that this would not be "business as usual," as his plan required employers to screen employees for signs of illness and for businesses to require staff to wear masks at all times.

The provisions of his reopening order extend until May 13th, at which point **the impact of loose social distancing restrictions may manifest themselves in an increase in cases, if the coronavirus has spread during this time of reopening.**

California Snapshot

California, threatened early by the initial spread of the virus in Washington State, passed strict stay-at-home orders that have been in effect since March 19, 2020. Under the leadership of the Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, California was the first of the fifty states to mandate its residents to shelter in place to decrease the spread of COVID-19.

Even as state leaders on the west coast broach conversations of opening up, Gov. Newsom is hesitant to lift restrictions, saying plainly, "The virus has not gone away."

On Tuesday of this week, state officials in California outlined a four-phase plan for reopening the economy, a framework that will slowly push Californians back to a life resembling normal. However, Gov. Newsom was quick to caution that any easing of restrictions is contingent on the state's ability to quickly re-implement them, should the confirmed cases begin to rise.

The plan involves 4 stages³: 1) increasing safety for essential workers through robust PPE supply, testing capacity, and contact tracing, 2) low-risk businesses and public spaces will open with enhanced social distancing policies, 3) Higher-risk businesses will be allowed to open with modifications to limit spread, 4) Stay-at-home orders will end and events with live crowds can resume.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/states-reopen-map-coronavirus.html>

² <https://www.ajc.com/blog/atlanta-restaurants/live-updates-metro-atlanta-restaurants-reopen-dining-rooms/7a7GaDzpyr5E15t3BRvdJ/>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/29/us/california-reopen-coronavirus.html>

Dr. Sonia Angell, the state's head of public health, **identifies that California is still in Stage 1**. What the exact benchmarks are to move in to the next phase, however, has not been made completely clear to the public.

New Mexico Snapshot

With New Mexico's case load plateauing, the Governor of New Mexico, Michelle Lujan Grisham, is preparing to lift certain restrictions across the state. However, the original stay-at-home orders, which were set to expire on May 1, have been extended to May 15.

The state has implemented a 15-member Economic Recovery Counsel, composed of local industry experts, tasked with advising the governor's office, as well as community mayors, on the "slow reopening of the state's economy."⁴ Loosened restrictions on in-person dining, elective hospital procedures, and outdoor recreation are **now dependent on "certain criteria" being met**.

Again, exactly what these criteria are remains unclear. New Mexico breaks down their reopening outline into multiple phases, including the Preparation Phase -- which they are currently in.

This phase asks for residents to remain in their homes, for agencies to develop safe plans and practices, and for state-wide testing to be ramped up. Phase 1 would then follow with some non-essential businesses opening to the public, while vulnerable individuals remain at home. Phase 2 & Beyond outlines the reopening of more businesses but will continue to restrict large gatherings.

Certain local Mayors, like Martin Hicks, indignant at these restrictions, have rebelled against governor-issued state orders.⁵ Hicks has been seen yelling at State Troopers and, harkening to Nazi-era totalitarianism, has labeled them "Gestapo." In stark contrast, others, like Louie Bonaguidi of Gallup, have been in close coordination with the governor to smother the COVID-19 pandemic. In the town of Gallup, severe threats of **the spreading coronavirus forced the governor to use the Riot Control Act** to set up roadblocks to contain the infection by barring non-essential visitors to the area.

As tensions rise in the state, local leadership, operating at times independently of state officials, will set the tone for separate regions.

⁴ <https://www.abqjournal.com/1446753/governor-to-extend-order-to-may-15.html>

⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-new-mexico-reopen-divide/2020/05/06/01ba22ea-8f6b-11ea-a9c0-73b93422d691_story.html