

Walsh orders construction shutdown in Boston as tally of cases statewide rises to 197 - The Boston Globe

He said the order would affect “tens of thousands” of workers.

Walsh’s announcement came shortly before state public health officials announced that the number of coronavirus cases in Massachusetts had risen to 197, up from a tally of 164 on Sunday.

The State Department of Public Health said that 1,296 coronavirus tests had yielded 189 positives for coronavirus. The other eight results came from tests by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Even as many other businesses around Boston have closed or ordered employees to work from home to try to stop the spread of the virus, large construction sites downtown were fully up and running Monday morning.

The busy construction sites and the multiple cranes soaring above the city’s skyline have been an emblem of the city’s bustling economy, which is now being dealt a body blow by the coronavirus outbreak.

Walsh said the shutdown was effective Tuesday. He said companies should maintain the crews necessary to make sure their sites are “safe and secure.” The sites need to be secure by Monday, March 23. He said skeleton crews could stay on to make sure the sites are safe.

He said the ban could be over in 14 days “and then we’ll revisit it and hopefully they can be the first workers back to work.”

He urged employers not to fire their workers, saying, “I want to remind Boston’s employers that we are in a robust construction market. Boston is home to a talented, hardworking construction workforce. And when we get back to work as usual, employers need to bring these workers back. The right thing that we need to do right now is lay them off, not fire them.”

Walsh also officially [announced the Boston Resiliency Fund](#), a partnership between the city and several leading institutions. He said the fund would grant money directly to local organizations and non-profits that support Boston families.

“Our main objectives are food access, technology to support at-home learning for our students, and supports for our healthcare workers and first responders, including childcare,” he said.

He also announced:

- All branches of the Boston Public Library are closing at 6 p.m. Monday.
- All Boston Centers for Youth and Families pools are closed. All BCYF gyms and fitness centers are closed. And by Wednesday, all BCYF programming will be

suspended. But certain BCYF centers will be open for youth meal distribution as long as Boston public schools are closed.

Walsh said all the moves being announced are aimed at stemming the spread of the virus.

“This is a critical time for us right now to prevent the spread,” he said. “If we can prevent the spread from happening and try to level the virus off, we’ll be in a better position long-term.”

The coronavirus has been causing widespread disruption in everyday life in Massachusetts.

Also Monday, at a State House news conference, Governor Charlie Baker, flanked by the leaders of the state House and Senate, announced the creation of a \$10 million small business recovery loan fund.

Baker on Sunday night had [ordered all public and private schools across Massachusetts to close for three weeks, beginning Tuesday](#), and limiting all restaurants to only takeout and delivery as of Tuesday.

Baker also lowered the threshold for any public gatherings from the 250-person limit he set last week to 25. The new limit applied to all community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based events, as well as sporting events with spectators, concerts, and conventions. It covers fitness centers, private clubs and theaters.

The governor stressed that grocery stores and pharmacies will remain open, pleaded with people not to hoard, and again noted that stores were getting regularly restocked.

At the Monday news conference, he said, “You can’t get into the business of denying people access to things like food and medicine and that’s the reason why supermarkets and other entities that are in the dry goods and supermarkets and pharmaceutical business are all basically treated differently than other kinds of establishments.”

The new restrictions on schools, restaurants and large gatherings will be lifted April 6.

The Boston Public Schools, with 54,000 students, will be closed starting Tuesday and remain shuttered until April 27, after spring vacation, [Walsh said Friday](#).

The Globe reported earlier Monday that, with ridership drastically reduced due to the coronavirus outbreak, the MBTA was also planning changes to service starting Tuesday.

The restrictions on public life across the state and the country are intended to stem the wave of infections by keeping Americans apart from each other. That, experts hope, will help avoid overloading the health care system.

The worldwide outbreak has sickened nearly 170,000 people and left more than 6,500 dead as of Monday morning, with thousands of new cases confirmed each day. The death toll in the United States climbed to 64, while infections passed 3,700.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as

fever and cough, and those with mild illness recover in about two weeks. But severe illness including pneumonia can occur, especially in the elderly and people with existing health problems, and recovery could take six weeks in such cases.

Experts caution that even if someone doesn't become severely ill, they can still carry the disease and spread it to others.

Material from The Associated Press and previous Globe stories was used in this report.

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