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Up North granted a partial reopening

Whitmer loosens restrictions just in time for Memorial Day

Todd Spangler Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

Retail businesses in northern parts of Michigan, including bars and restaurants, will be able to reopen Friday as coronavirus-related cases and deaths continue to fall rapidly across the state, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said Monday. Whitmer issued an executive order Monday allowing nonessential and non-exempt busi-

"We're seeing it's safe to take this step at this time. ... In some regions of the state, they've just not been hit as hard."



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer

nesses and offices in the Upper Peninsula and 17 counties in the northern Lower Peninsula, including those around Traverse City, to reopen as long as they follow guidelines intended to slow the virus' spread. It marks the first time in two months since

Whitmer first put her stay-at-home order in place that those businesses will be able to admit the public and it comes just ahead of the Memorial Day weekend.

The impacted counties are:
 ■ In the northern Lower Peninsula: Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Montmorency, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon and Wexford.
 ■ On the Upper Peninsula: Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon and School-

craft. Bars and restaurants will be allowed to operate as long as they do so at half their capacity, and offices where work can't be done remotely may also open, subject to social distancing rules.

Short-term vacation rentals continue to be closed for now and the change doesn't affect other parts of the governor's order, with school remaining closed, for instance. People will also still be required to wear masks and make every effort to keep 6 feet away from others as

See REOPENING, Page 6A

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Infection totals
 Michigan: At least 4,915 deaths, 51,915 cases
 U.S.: 90,338 deaths, 1,508,168 cases
 World: 318,213 deaths, 4,795,941 cases
 (As of 9 p.m. Monday)

Sewage testing could track coronavirus
 METRO, 4A

Duggan: Detroit ready to reopen for business
 5A

Survivors warn of reopening too fast
 7A

Limited service for Up North restaurants, bars
 MICHIGAN BUSINESS, 8A

WHO will launch independent probe
 NATION+WORLD, 11A

Inside today's Free Press

- Obituaries10A
- Life+Tech.....6B
- Comics7B
- Puzzles8B-9B

Weather

High 67° ■ Low 53°
 Showers early. Forecast, 2A

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AUTOWORKERS STREAM BACK INTO PLANTS

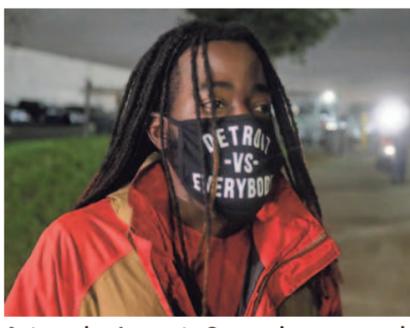
Assembly lines crank up



Autoworkers arrive to start their shifts Monday at the FCA plant on Mound Road. It was the first day back in two months after being shut down because of the coronavirus epidemic. PHOTOS BY KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DFP

Some are nervous despite safety measures put in place

Eric D. Lawrence and Phoebe Wall Howard
 Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK



Autoworker Laruante Gary arrives prepared with his mask to start his shift.

In the predawn darkness along Mound Road north of Detroit on Monday, the autoworkers hurried toward the unknown. The first day back to work in two months since the coronavirus pandemic shut down manufacturing came with its share of nervousness for many of those heading inside Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' Warren Truck Assembly before 5 a.m. Of those who paused long enough to speak to a Free Press reporter only one said he was truly comfortable coming back. The rest said it was too soon or talked about the loss of life from COVID-19. At this plant alone, where the popular, older version of the Ram 1500 pickup is built, the toll has been tragic, with four dead, although it's not known where any of them contracted the virus.

See AUTOWORKERS, Page 7A

1 in 3 avoid medical care because of COVID-19

Redford man nearly lost life after suffering heart attack

Kristen Jordan Shamus Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

Michael Devine had chest pain. He thought it was heartburn. He thought it would go away. He tried to will it away. Because in the middle of a pandemic, Devine, 51, of Redford didn't want to have to go to the hospital. He wanted to avoid the one place where he knew there would be people with COVID-19.

So Devine chose to wait it out — like nearly one-third of Americans who said they also put off getting medical care to avoid the risk of exposure to novel coronavirus, according to a new poll from the American College of Emergency Physicians and Morning Consult.

As many as 80% of the 2,201 adults polled April 18-20 for the survey said they were concerned about contracting COVID-19 in a hospital emergency room.

"Nobody wants to go to the hospital, especially during this time of COVID-19," Devine said. "No way you want to go."

In addition to worries about contracting the virus, Devine said he was also concerned that he would add unnecessary stress to a health system already taxed by the pandemic, taking medical resources from severely ill coronavirus patients who needed critical care.

"I felt like this would just interrupt a doctor that's working with a patient that's more important, you know, somebody that probably has COVID-19 on a ventilator."

The decision to avoid treatment could have killed Devine, who works in distribution for a manufacturing company that has aided in the

See MEDICAL CARE, Page 6A

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The coronavirus pandemic

To reopen, businesses must have a COVID-19 plan

Jennifer Dixon Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

As businesses in Michigan begin to reopen, they will be required to follow strict safety guidelines to protect their workers and customers from the novel coronavirus, according to an executive order signed Monday by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

The 12-page executive order requires employers to develop a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan that can be readily provided to employees, labor unions and customers.

The governor's order comes as she allows retailers, restaurants and offices to reopen across much of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula starting Friday.

Employers that are reopening must develop their preparedness plans by June 1, or within two weeks of resuming in-person activities, whichever is later.

The governor's workplace safety order also requires employers to provide training on

workplace infection-control practices and the proper use of personal protective equipment.

Employers must also spell out how employees who have COVID-19 symptoms or a COVID-19 diagnosis should alert their company. And employers also must spell out how workers can report unsafe working conditions.

The executive order provides detailed instructions for employers in construction, manufacturing, retail, research labs, offices and restaurants.

As companies reopen, they must designate one or more work site supervisors to monitor COVID-19 control strategies, and this person must be present at all times that workers are on-site.

The rules also require employers to provide nonmedical face masks to their workers; keep employees 6 feet apart, and when that's not possible, require workers to wear masks; increase cleaning and disinfecting; and make cleaning supplies available to workers.

Also on Monday, the governor signed an ex-

ecutive directive that allows the director of the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to appoint a director of COVID-19 workplace safety to coordinate state efforts to monitor and enforce workplace safeguards.

And state agencies that enforce workplace safety regulations will be required to publicly post citations against employers that fail to follow the rules outlined in Whitmer's workplace safety order.

The governor's order comes as federal and state occupational safety agencies have launched investigations into workplace fatalities at four hospitals in Michigan and a nursing home whose employees died of complications from the coronavirus.

Those investigations were opened earlier this month by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also known as MIOSHA, according to records kept by OSHA and reviewed by the Free Press.

"The vast majority of Michigan businesses are doing their part to slow the spread of COVID-19, but we must do more to ensure Michiganders are safe at work," Whitmer said in a statement.

"This executive order, and the director of COVID-19 workplace safety, will help ensure employers take the needed measures to protect workers and customers from the spread of COVID-19," she said.

"We're grateful to Gov. Whitmer for taking action today to save lives and hold down the spread of this awful virus," Ron Bieber, president of the Michigan AFL-CIO, said in a news release from the governor's office.

"It's not right to force people back to work without making sure they're kept safe. Anyone returning to work should know they'll be safe in their workplace, and our state should be acting to hold bad actors accountable," Bieber said.

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Medical care

Continued from Page 1A

coronavirus response by producing ventilator parts.

"I had your typical signs of heart attack," Devine said. "My right jaw hurt. My left arm was killing me and the middle of my chest was hurting. ... These are signs of a heart attack, and I was ... just in denial.

"I'm like, you know, I think it's indigestion. I don't ... think it's that serious."

After more than a week of off-and-on symptoms, Devine said he woke up in the middle of the night of April 21 into April 22, and "it felt like there was an elephant on my chest."

Still, he decided to go to work that morning. He'd just been called back after a nearly month-long furlough, and said he was excited to get back on the job.

But as he drove to work the morning of April 22, Devine made a quick decision to instead go to the emergency room at Beaumont Hospital in Farmington Hills.

There, doctors discovered he had, in fact, suffered a heart attack.

"He underwent a cardiac catheterization, and he actually had two critically blocked arteries that we had to open up with stents," said Dr. Anthony Lutz, a general cardiologist for Beaumont Health, noting that Devine's right coronary and ramus arteries were blocked.

"Those arteries were supplying the inferior wall of his heart. So it has reduced the squeeze of his heart some. I think he'll still recover from it, but he did suffer a heart attack because those arteries blocked up, and that had been going on for some time. Those chest pains, you know, if we could have gotten to them earlier, we might have been able to hold off the heart attack."

Lutz said he and other physicians are very concerned about patients like Devine who aren't coming to the emergency room when they have serious symptoms that could be signs of heart attack or stroke.

"From our cardiology standpoint, we've seen a dramatic decline in people presenting with chest pain and heart attacks and arrhythmia complaints that we're typically used to seeing," he said.

"And I think after talking to patients, they're



Michael Devine, 51, of Redford wanted to avoid the hospital but eventually went. He found out he had suffered a heart attack. "I think I got very lucky. I really do." JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

scared to come to the hospital over fears that they're going to get sick or be exposed and maybe be worse off had they not come to the hospital."

Dr. Jay Jagannathan, a neurosurgeon specializing in cranial and spinal surgery in private practice, said even if patients are hesitant to go to an emergency room, they should, at the very least, call their primary care physician to get advice if they are having any emergency symptoms, whether they are similar to heart attack or stroke.

"The common symptoms of stroke are going to be weakness in one side of the body, particularly weakness that comes and goes and gets better," Jagannathan said. "That sign is called a transient ischemic attack or TIA. ... The other symptoms are going to be ... loss of coordination, loss of sensation one side of the body, severe headaches, double vision."

Increasingly, he said, doctors are seeing blood clots and stroke in COVID-19 patients. Some people, he said, don't know they have coronavirus at all. Their first symptoms are

stroke symptoms.

"It's found out later on that they actually test positive for COVID as well," said Jagannathan, who works out of three Michigan hospital systems — Garden City Hospital, which is run by Prime Healthcare, MidMichigan Medical Center, which is run by the University of Michigan Health System, and McLaren Health Care.

Lutz agreed, adding that hospital systems are ready and able to help people who need emergency treatment without exposing them to coronavirus.

"We're very focused on trying to provide a ... safe environment for the patients," he said. "We have policies and procedures to screen, and make sure everyone's safe to come to the hospital and that we can treat them ... safely."

But Lutz said he hadn't realized that some patients, like Devine, were not only concerned about getting coronavirus at the hospital, but they also are worried about being an unnecessary drain on the health care system during the pandemic.

"I wasn't really thinking that patients were thinking they may be a burden to the health care system," Lutz said. "I think we need to help them out and say, 'We do have the capabilities still to handle it. ... We're not overwhelmed.' I think there was a brief time and there we were. That has passed.

"We want people to come in for the same things they were going to come in with before. If you were concerned enough to think you needed to come to the hospital, we still want you to come to the hospital. We have the capabilities to treat you and you're not going to be exposed to COVID-19 any more than the general population."

Devine said he's grateful he survived his ordeal. At 51, he knows he's young to have had a heart attack. There's no family history of heart disease, and he's otherwise healthy. His biggest risk factor is that he was a smoker.

He's since given that up.

"I think I'm lucky," he said. "I think I got very lucky. I really do. ... God must have a certain reason."

Devine has recovered enough to return to work, and also has started to make other lifestyle changes, too.

"If I follow these steps, I can have many years left. ... If I keep doing the right things, I'll have longevity," he said.

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Reopening

Continued from Page 1A

Whitmer has cautioned she could return to stricter sanctions if infection rates climb again.

But it still represents a significant move forward.

"We're seeing it's safe to take this step at this time," Whitmer said during a briefing with reporters on Monday, where she also outlined requirements that businesses across the state begin to develop plans — to be finalized by June 1 — on how they will protect workers, provide them equipment to keep them from contracting the virus and conform to social distancing requirements that workers are separated.

She said allowing for a limited reopening in northern Michigan made sense at this point, however.

"In some regions of the state, they've just not been hit as hard," she said. But she warned that people still need to keep their distance and that local officials may enforce more strict rules — such as requiring outdoor seating at bars and restaurants — if they deem it necessary.

Child care would be allowed in order to help

people returning to work, the governor said, but details still need to be worked out on that and other related issues ahead of the relaxing of the rules at 12:01 a.m. Friday.

As of Monday, Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the affected northern Lower Peninsula counties accounted for 4,453 of the state's 51,915 cases — less than 9% of the total.

It was not immediately clear when the governor would relax restrictions in other parts of Michigan. The Whitmer administration divided the state into eight regions in order to make more local decisions about when to reopen businesses. Monday's announcement only affected Regions 6 and 8.

Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, the state's chief medical executive, said trends in cases and deaths in the Detroit and Grand Rapids areas are positive but that case levels remain too high to relax restrictions on social distancing and businesses just yet.

"They're not quite ready to move (to the next phase of reopening)," she said.

Change comes amid protests, lawsuit

Monday's announcement comes as Whitmer faces increased pressure to relax her stay-at-home order, one of the toughest in the nation

and one of the few that remains in place as cases and deaths continue to drop precipitously.

As of Sunday, Michigan reported 638 more confirmed cases of coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, statewide, and 11 deaths, the most encouraging daily figures reported since late March.

Michigan has had 51,915 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 4,915 deaths, making it one of the hardest hit states in the U.S. since the state's first reported case March 10.

Whitmer — whose orders have been the subject of protests at the state Capitol and lawsuits filed by Republican opponents — somewhat relaxed an earlier order on April 24, allowing manufacturing and construction to restart with certain guidelines in place and permitting retail other than those considered essential, such as pharmacies and grocery stores, which had already been open, to provide curbside delivery.

The current stay-at-home order is effective statewide until May 28, though Whitmer had discussed making changes by region depending on the case numbers, deaths and testing.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey, R-Clacklake, who has helped lead efforts fighting Whitmer's orders, saying he was "cautiously

optimistic that the governor may be coming around to what we have known for some time, that our citizens are ready and able to safely resume daily life."

U.S. Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Midland, whose district includes some of the affected counties on the Lower Peninsula, said he knows people across the region are eager to reopen their businesses.

"I hope more regions of the state will be able to reopen soon and that everyone will take the steps that are needed to protect employees and customers," he said.

Traverse City Mayor Jim Carruthers, who appeared at the briefing with Whitmer, said he was pleased by the governor's decision but that people must remain "mindful" of the threat and take precautions.

"It's horrible to see all the houses and businesses closed," he said. "But we need to make sure we protect the well-being and safety of our (residents). ... We still must practice social distancing. We still must wear masks ... but if we do our part as a community, as a state, we can stop this."

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