

Wednesday, 15 April 2021

## TOP LINE - WEEKLY

**Pressure to reopen the U.S. economy is gaining traction in policy circles and the general public. Already in Austria and Denmark, countries are planning to partially open aspects of their economy. Simultaneously, warnings of COVID-19 “rebounds” of infection rates are given by health officials, as China, Singapore, and other countries experience a resurgence in the virus and death rates climb across the globe. Countries affected early on by the virus such as France, Italy, and South Korea are seeing declines in the virus, while infection rates in countries such as Turkey and Brazil are far from understood, let alone under control. Rampant, global spread of the virus serves as a reminder that the human and economic toll of the virus has yet to peak, even as countries hit early take an eye towards re-opening. In fact, even thinking about a ‘peak’ to this crisis is perhaps the wrong perspective, as the effects will continue for many years after the health emergency is over. As businesses develop plans to reopen workplaces, leaders must include contingencies which account for rebounds in COVID-19 infections and deaths, accompanied by second or third waves of lockdown measures. Rolling or gradual re-openings are advised, and provisions of testing capabilities, protective equipment for workers and establishment of protocols for possible infections should remain a priority.**

*Question to Consider: How can businesses minimize economic and workforce risk as national and local economies open at different rates, risking rebounds and additional lockdown measures? By benchmarking with our clients Secure Source can help security leaders develop the ‘playbook’ to implement a collaborative best practices program.*

## COVID-19: THE HIGHLIGHTS

In the U.S., COVID-19 hospitalizations in New York have stabilized; however, New York's total deaths more than [doubled](#) from normal rates over the past month, reinforcing the human [toll](#) of the virus. Sweden's resistance to a lockdown has provoked [criticism](#) from its neighbors amid a sharply rising COVID-19 death toll. A hastily invoked lockdown order led Turkey's Interior Minister to offer his [resignation](#) after citizens flooded the streets to stock up on supplies, risking even greater rates of infection. COVID-19 rates are also [spreading](#) throughout South America, as states such as Brazil [dismiss](#) quarantine measures as too costly in economic terms. Rising violence and economic downturn make Mexico particularly [vulnerable](#) as its COVID-19 rates climb. Russia also reported a [surge](#) in COVID-19 cases and deaths, even amid criticism of government undercounting. Until numbers stabilize, the human cost of reopening national commerce will be high.

## BEYOND THE NOISE

**Risk of reopening:** Tension over opening the U.S. economy by May 1<sup>st</sup> has prompted warnings of [rebounds](#) in COVID-19 cases even in areas that have made progress against the virus. Some health officials recommend a sustained reduction in cases for at least two weeks prior to relaxing lockdowns and quarantine measures. Spain is pursuing a gradual [reopening](#) of construction and manufacturing, even as broader lockdown measures remain in effect. Cases in China have risen for the first time since March, reportedly due to [travel](#), highlighting the risk of reopening transnational commerce too early.

- **Secure Balance:** Plan to reopen offices gradually to balance economic and health risk. Address risk of exposure and rebound effect in messages to workforce. Ensure workforce understands guidelines and processes to limit likelihood of exposure. Provide continued telework options to workforce; encourage those at-risk to utilize telework options.

**Steps for reopening:** Steps towards economic reopening will be [slow](#) and uneven as businesses evaluate risk and take steps to bring the office-bound and industrial workforce back online. Acceleration of testing capacity is viewed as a precursor to a full-fledged economic reopening. "Contact tracing" is another [protocol](#) for virus tracking even as it raises privacy and security concerns. U.S. governors pledge to [coordinate](#) economic restarts locally as infection numbers stabilize at varying rates.

- **Secure Continuity:** Stagger worker shifts and limit travel so one new infection does not infect an entire team or company. Limit numbers of individuals in elevator, conference rooms, and break room or cafeteria. Provide at-desk or at-home teleconference support for meetings to minimize contact. Establish sanitation procedures, on-site health checks, and provide masks at entry points.

**Shortages continue:** State and local officials remain in [competition](#) for protective equipment without clear recourse for obtaining it from domestic or international suppliers. Emergency FDA [authorization](#) was extended to a Chinese manufacturer with a history of providing faulty products to the U.S., raising concerns that masks provided will be substandard, exacerbating the PPE crisis.

- **Secure Supplies:** Prepare for continued difficulty in obtaining protective equipment and sanitation supplies. Consider how to mitigate supply shortages while supporting worker health during process of reopening. Stockpile PPE in preparation for a resurgence of the virus. Implement quality control measures when working with new suppliers.

**TRUSTED RESOURCES: for numbers & guidance**

[Johns Hopkins University](#) – Coronavirus Resource Center

[World Health Organization](#) – COVID-19 Pandemic

[Center for Disease Control](#) – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

***Please contact Secure Source International at [info@securesource.com](mailto:info@securesource.com) to schedule a leadership roundtable with our intelligence and security experts to dive into these topics and discuss security and safety related best-practices.***