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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON CNN'S NEW DAY

Alisyn Camerota: New York City launching a Vaccine Command Center this morning to handle the logistics of getting people vaccinated, and to try to win the public's trust through community outreach. Joining us now is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Alisyn. How you doing?

Camerota: I'm doing well. What a day? I mean, this is a historic day, even, you know, amidst all of the sad and tragic news about the hospitalizations and the deaths. This is a moment that we wouldn't have imagined, you know, obviously just a few months ago. And so, just give us some of the nuts and bolts here. Do you know what time the first person will be vaccinated in New York?

Mayor: Well, Alisyn, I just have to say at the outset, we've been through so much in this city. We were the epicenter, this crisis. I mean, this is an amazing day. This is a day we have been waiting and praying for and, and the vac – it's not just a vaccine, it's a shot of hope. It really is a moment where we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. So, today the vaccine is here in New York City. I'm proud to tell you it is here. It has arrived. The first vaccinations will happen later today. This afternoon, I'm going to be there as one of the first New Yorkers gets vaccinated. And look, we have a lot of tough weeks ahead still, but this is going to put wind in our sails and give us the hope to keep going.

Camerota: Do you know who – you know, the identity of the first person who will be vaccinated?

Mayor: I don't have that yet. I do know what our priorities are. Our priorities are the frontline health care workers who have been the heroes of this crisis, protecting them so they can protect all of us. And of course, nursing home residents and nursing home workers who have been through just the brunt of this. So, that's where the first shots are going to go.

Camerota: Can you tell us where the first vaccines will be happening?

Mayor: It's a group of New York City hospitals. Again, we're waiting for the final confirmations. We know the vaccine's here in New York City. You're going to start to see vaccine given out in the course of the day. I'll be there to narrate it for you, when it happens at one of our hospitals. But what is definitely the case is vaccine start – vaccinations start today in New York City. They're going to – throughout the week, more and more, we're going to really go fast because we have that command center that you mentioned, which is going to make sure the vaccine is moving quickly, where it's needed most. And we're going to be very transparent about

who's getting the vaccine, how the priorities are being followed. We're not allowing people to cut in line. Doesn't matter how much money you have, how much privilege you have, you have to wait your turn like everybody else. We're going to make sure, Alisyn, that the neighborhoods hit hardest by the coronavirus – and overwhelmingly that was Black, Latino, and Asian communities – that they get their fair share, and they get priority in getting this vaccine out.

Camerota: When do you think you'll get one?

Mayor: You know what I've said, I believe in this vaccine, my health care team believes in it, but I'm going to wait until it's my turn. I think it's really important for leaders to follow the instructions of our health care leadership. And when they say it's time for a leader to go up there, because it's our priority time by age, by health care, etcetera, that's when I'll get mine.

Camerota: So, at the same time that this very promising development is happening, obviously hospitalizations around the country are going up. Today indoor dining in New York City is being shut down. And I know that you and Governor Cuomo don't ever reach these decisions lightly. But in terms of the data, I mean, if I just pull up the data of where the most spread happens, the way coronavirus is spread is, number one, in these household gatherings, small gatherings with, you know, friends and neighbors and family. That's 74 percent of the spread, I mean, according to contact tracers. Then there's number two, health care delivery. Number three, higher education system, meaning at the colleges. Number four, education, and number five is restaurants and bars. And by the time you get to number five, it's one-and-a-half percent of the spread. And so, is it possible that the closing restaurants isn't going to do what you hope it will?

Mayor: Look, Alisyn, there's no question we're dealing with a huge and complex challenge. And I feel for these restaurant owners. We've been working so hard to help them stay open. We created outdoor dining as a permanent feature here in New York City to help restaurants survive, and the hundreds of thousands of people who work there. We want them to have their livelihoods, but here's the problem. Positivity for the coronavirus has increased intensely in New York City and New York State in recent weeks. Hospitalizations, unfortunately, we're seeing a surge of hospitalizations. We've got to protect people's lives, we've got to protect our hospitals' ability to save lives. And when it comes to this situation, you've got to start shutting down the most sensitive areas. And look, Governor Cuomo said in a New York Times interview that he could see a larger shutdown happening in New York City. I think he's right. I think that's something we have to be ready for in the coming weeks because this kind of momentum that the disease has right now, we've got to stop it. We've got to stop it before it causes too much damage, too much pain, and we have to stop it to give time for the vaccine to really be properly distributed. This is the last big battle against the coronavirus here in New York City. I've been saying to people, we got a tough December, tough January, let's fight one more battle. And then the vaccine will have been spread and do its work. We've got to be disciplined in this last chance to make sure we fight the coronavirus back.

Camerota: I understand, but I mean, in terms of you saying that we have to start shutting down the most sensitive places, it doesn't look like restaurants are that place. And so, on balance, maybe it would be more important to protect people's livelihoods and paychecks than a place that does 1.5 percent of the spreading.

Mayor: Look, it's a very fair concern, but I want to go back to what our health care leaders say all the time. When you're trying to stop this kind of momentum with the disease, you're going to have to do a number of different things. It's not just one thing. We're obviously not going to people's homes to check how many people around the table. We have to deal with the places where people gather. And unfortunately, with restaurants, they're gathering indoors and they're gathering without face coverings on because you're eating and drinking. They are particularly sensitive. That's been proven all over the world, Alisyn. And look, unfortunately, this is just one of a number of steps that I think are going to be needed. There's going to be more restrictions after this. So, it's not just –

Camerota: Like what?

Mayor: – Choosing one industry time here [inaudible] –

Camerota: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: [Inaudible] to do, to say the least. But look, bottom line here is New Yorkers are responding –

Camerota: [Inaudible] just to prepare us, what other restrictions are you imagining next?

Mayor: I think, Alisyn, you're talking about the potential – and again, I'm quoting from Governor Cuomo and I think he's right. There's the potential of having to do a full pause, a full shutdown in the coming weeks because we can't let this kind of momentum go. I mean, think about it for a moment. This city was the epicenter. We fought back. We became one of the safest places in the country. We opened our schools when most major cities didn't, we've kept our schools safe, but now we're seeing the kind of level of infection with the coronavirus we haven't seen since May. And we have got to stop that momentum or else our hospital system will be threatened. That's worth putting restrictions in place for, protect our hospitals, right at the point when we can beat this thing, save lives, protect hospitals, turn the page over the next month or two. Then I think our economy comes back very, very strong.

Camerota: And just in terms of that full shutdown, is that just across the board, is that targeted, and what would be the trigger for that?

Mayor: Look, the State of New York makes the ultimate decision, but I think what we're looking at now is something that would be more across the board because of the sheer magnitude of what we're facing. It's a conversation I'm having with the Governor, the State's having with the City constantly. And we obviously are sensitive to the fact it's the holidays, it's the holiday shopping season. We want people to shop at those local small businesses, mom-and-pop stores, help them through. But in the end, our number one job is to protect people's health and safety. So, I think the direction we're going in could well be one of those fuller shutdowns.

Camerota: Okay, Mayor Bill de Blasio, we really appreciate your time. Thanks for all the information. And we'll be watching at the Vaccination Command Center today.

Mayor: It's going to be a good day, Alisyn. Thank you.

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