

# DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER



As city tries to imagine making a comeback, mask-wearing on the subway will remain a must, and continued service cuts will mean closer contact with the surging homeless population and anybody who might be carrying the dreaded virus.

# NEXT STOP, PURGATORY

## With subways a homeless haven & crews dying, normalcy is far off

**COMPLETE COVID-19 COVERAGE PAGES 2-12**

## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

# ER doctor on bug front line kills herself

BY JOHN ANNESE  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

A prominent Manhattan emergency room doctor who had treated a staggering number of coronavirus patients killed herself in Virginia, authorities said Monday.

Dr. Lorna Breen, 49, the medical director of New York-Presbyterian Allen Hospital's emergency department, died by suicide in Charlottesville, a spokesman for the local police department told the Daily News.

Spokesman Tyler Hawn said police responded to a call Sunday seeking medical help, and Breen (inset) was rushed to UVA Health System University Hospital but succumbed to self-inflicted

injuries.

"She gave what she had, and she's a casualty of the war in the trenches, as far as I'm concerned," her father, Dr. Philip Breen, told The News. "She's a true hero."

Breen's father said the crush of coronavirus cases his daughter handled was overwhelming, and that she herself became ill with COVID-19, though she went back to work after a week and a half. She had no history of depression, he said. "She was a very outgoing, very energetic person who, I don't know what snapped, but something blew up in her, and so she ended up taking her own life," he said.

He said his daughter traveled to Charlottesville to stay with her sister after the hospital sent her home a second time. "She stayed home about a week and a half, but I think she felt guilty about not being at work," her father said. "The last time I talked to her was before she went in for her 12-hour shift that she couldn't finish."

"Just before she went back, she said that the ambulance had been waiting outside the building for over three hours with sick people. They couldn't even get the people out of the ambulances in there," he added.

On Monday, Columbia University Irving Medical Center and New York-Presbyterian hailed her tireless devotion to her work. "Dr. Breen is a hero who brought the highest ideals of medicine to the challenging front lines of the emergency department," the statement said. "Words cannot convey the sense of loss we feel today."

The doctor's death comes in the wake of the suicide of another frontline worker — EMT John Mondello, 23, who took his own life with a gun that belonged to his retired NYPD cop father. His body was found by the shoreline in Astoria, just a few paces from Astoria Park, on Friday night.

# CAN'T MASK THE DANGER

## Bug may return with regular riders



BY KERRY BURKE,  
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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

MTA officials are scrambling to ensure New York's subway system doesn't turn into a rolling petri dish for a new wave of coronavirus infections once state officials begin easing lockdown measures.

With nearly 6 million daily commuters pre-pandemic and not enough space to sneeze — let alone stand several feet apart — there's a growing concern that a return to regular work life will make some straphangers super-spreaders.

Rules put in place earlier this month that require subway riders to wear face coverings are expected to remain in place for months to come, officials said. But even with the MTA's best efforts, transit leaders say the public has some responsibility for containing the virus.

"Customers' awareness of and engagement with their own safety will be key [to reopening]," said interim NYC Transit President Sarah Feinberg. "Everyone in the system will have a role to play in keeping our city healthy."

That message isn't reassuring to riders who will be dependent on public transportation to get to work, but fear for

their health.

"I am diabetic and I am at real risk. Riding the subway is dangerous," said Marie Balthazar, 58, a home health attendant. "People are not social distancing and the homeless are everywhere. I can't work, I can't even see my doctor. When the coronavirus is over, then we'll see."

Before the pandemic, roughly 8,268 subway train trips carried some 5.5 million riders a day, a ratio that is too close for comfort in the age of social distancing.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority officials have reached out to health experts to determine whether straphangers can safely stand less than 6 feet apart if they're all wearing masks.

Subway ridership has fallen by roughly 93% this month — but projections published by the MTA estimate that number will tick up to 60% by September.

In order to give those riders space, transit honchos need thousands of frontline workers who have contracted COVID-19 or been directed to quarantine to return to work. The workforce shortage has forced the MTA to reduce subway service by roughly 30% since late March.

A second wave of the outbreak could throw a wrench in that plan if more workers fall ill.

MTA heads plan to expand a program to check the temperatures of transit workers, and Gov. Cuomo on Monday announced that 1,000 MTA employees will receive antibody tests this week to estimate how many frontline transit workers have caught the disease. At least 84 MTA employees have died from coronavirus, according to officials.

Paloma Martinez, 43, a housekeeper in Brooklyn, said she was last on the subway two weeks ago — and isn't looking forward to riding the system when the lockdown ends.

"It's crowded, dirty and filled with the homeless. With the coronavirus it's too much," she said. "Eventually I'm going to have to go back to the subway. I have no choice. I have to go to work."

The MTA has hired private contractors to ramp up its cleaning efforts to address the cleanliness issue. The agency plans to expand an initiative launched in March to disinfect each subway car and bus every 72 hours and clean surfaces in stations multiple times a day.

Transit officials have even toyed with the idea of installing hand sanitizer

## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

## Grim scenes of filth, arson &amp; perversion

BY MICHAEL GARTLAND AND CLAYTON GUSE  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

It was a circle of hell Dante never imagined.

In a mind-boggling 10-hour period Monday, subway workers dealt with arson, inappropriate sexual behavior and human waste from riders who've turned to mass transit for shelter during the coronavirus crisis, Metropolitan Transportation Authority officials said.

The mayhem started early: At 1:13 a.m. an "unruly passenger" was reported masturbating on a No. 6 train at the Pelham Bay Park station at the northern end of the line in the Bronx — an indecent exposure that triggered a brief train delay, an internal MTA report shows.

At 10 a.m., on the other end of the city at Brooklyn's Flatbush Ave. terminal, subway workers called cops to remove a homeless man covered in human waste in a train car at the station. The entire train was removed from service because of the filth, according to

another report.

An hour later, another homeless rider was caught lighting pieces of cardboard on fire on a Manhattan-bound No. 2 train near the Eastern Parkway-Brooklyn Museum station. He was arrested, according to MTA officials. The incident resulted in a 30-minute delay on the line.

"The city has failed our most vulnerable who are in desperate need of mental health care and housing services," interim NYC Transit President Sarah Feinberg said of the chaos. "NYC Transit will continue to do everything in our power to address this important issue, including working closely with all partners, but it is outrageous that a transportation agency is conducting social services in place of the city."

City Hall's response to the mounting problem hasn't changed over the past six weeks, even as subway crime has flattened and ridership plummeted by roughly 95%.

"None of our outreach efforts have changed," said city Department of Homeless Services spokesman Isaac McGinn. "The way we're helping people off the streets will continue."

NYPD officials said in a statement that homelessness is not a crime, and have offered no solutions.

With Rocco Parascandola

Coping with the homeless is just one of many problems the MTA faces when it comes to the city's eventual reopening. Mayor de Blasio (below) announced a "Safe Haven" plan Monday to provide beds for 200 homeless.



dispensers at every subway station — mirroring an initiative announced in Paris earlier this month — but are wary New York's riders will damage or destroy the devices.

The state's timeline for easing back into regular life has yet to be fully revealed. Cuomo on Monday announced that restrictions will be relaxed in some upstate areas starting May 15, but offered no timetable for downstate.

The city is also trying to address the growing number of homeless people who have turned to mass transit for shelter during the pandemic.

Late Monday Mayor de Blasio called on the MTA to temporarily close 10 train stations — including Coney Island/Stillwell Ave. in Brooklyn, Jamaica/179th St. in Queens and World Trade Center in lower Manhattan — to allow for more thorough cleaning.

The MTA will require all individuals to exit trains, and homeless people will be offered services and a place to sleep by NYPD Homeless Outreach and Department of Homeless Services, the mayor's office said in a statement.

"Happy the city has agreed to do more to provide safe shelter for homeless New Yorkers as we have been asking for months. We thank NYPD for their

partnership, and urge City Hall to take additional aggressive actions so we can focus on safely running transit service and not providing social services," said the MTA's chief communications officer, Abbey Collins.

The move comes as multiple photos and videos shared with the Daily News in recent weeks paint a troubling picture underground. On any given day in any given corner of the city's sprawling subway, train cars are filled with people who have nowhere else to go or choose the subways over the shelter system.

The News on Monday afternoon witnessed dozens of homeless people sprawled out on train cars at Brooklyn's Flatbush Ave. terminal on the end of the Nos. 2 and 5 lines. A pair of cops walked by the filthy cars but didn't try to dislodge any of the riders.

Jeremiah Macintosh, 53, said conditions have gotten much worse during the shutdown.

"It's hell out here. They tried to kick me off, but I got different ways to get back on," said Macintosh, who is homeless. "I agree with them, I get off, get out, and I get on the next train. The shelters are hell with coronavirus. I have nowhere else to go."

MTA and transit union officials have

over the last week blasted the city's response to the growing subway homeless problem, which de Blasio on Thursday said was under control.

On Monday, the mayor's statement said the city would open 200 "Safe Haven beds" starting this week "prioritized for the most vulnerable unsheltered New Yorkers living on the streets and subways." He also reported "outreach teams" have had 17,000 "contacts" to talk about COVID-19 with the homeless, with 12 people taken for assessment. No positive cases were reported, the statement said.

"Mayor de Blasio has to direct the police to escort the mentally ill and the homeless out of the system," said Transport Workers Union Local 100 President Tony Utano. "This is a life-and-death situation, not a quality-of-life issue. They are posing a real health hazard and a real danger to my members — and to the essential workers who are supposed to be the only ones using the system in the first place."

An NYPD spokesman said in a statement that the department believes "homelessness is not a crime" and that "officers are patrolling the subways" and enforcing transit rules.

With Rocco Parascandola