News

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Governor Murphy and Governor Cuomo Launch Exposure Notification Apps to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19

COVID Alert NJ and COVID Alert NY Notify Users of Potential COVID-19 Exposure While Ensuring Individual Privacy and Security

Apps Use Google and Apple Bluetooth Technology to Add a tool to New Jersey and New York Contact Tracing Programs

TRENTON -- Governor Phil Murphy and New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the launch of COVID-19 exposure notification mobile apps in their respective states that will serve as crucial tools to supplement the effort to trace and contact individuals subject to a COVID exposure. The apps, COVID Alert NJ and COVID Alert NY, notify users of potential COVID-19 exposure while maintaining user privacy and security. With today's launch, New Jersey and New York join Pennsylvania and Delaware in creating a regional COVID Alert app network that operates across state lines to stop the spread of COVID-19. Connecticut has also announced it will launch an app in the near future using the same technology.

The free mobile apps–available to anyone 18 or older who lives, works, or attends college in New Jersey or New York — are available for download from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

“Over the course of our public health emergency, we’ve called for a shared sense of personal responsibility to support our contact tracing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19,” said Governor Murphy. “With the launch of COVID Alert NJ and our regional app network, New Jerseyans and residents in our neighboring states can support our fight against COVID-19 simply by downloading an application on their phone. The app is free and secure, and your identity, personally identifying information, and location will never be collected. The more phones that have the app, the better we can fight this pandemic.”

“Throughout the course of this crisis, I have asked my fellow New Yorkers to wear a mask, keep an appropriate distance from each other, get tested and participate in our contact tracing program, because only by working together can we flatten the curve. And that’s what we did – but we must remain vigilant, which is why I am asking New Yorkers to once again come together and use this latest tool, COVID Alert NY, to strengthen New York’s contact tracing program, stop the spread and keep our communities safe,” Governor Cuomo said. “Downloading COVID Alert NY will not just help protect you and your loved ones, but will help protect all New Yorkers.”

The apps use Exposure Notification System technology developed by Google and Apple to strengthen New Jersey and New York’s contact tracing programs statewide. The COVID Alert apps will notify users if they have been in close contact – within six feet for at least 10 minutes – with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Knowing about a potential exposure can help individuals quickly make a plan to stay safe, including contacting their physician or the State Health Department hotlines to get more information about quarantining and testing to prevent community spread.

COVID Alert NJ and COVID Alert NY are completely anonymous and do not track or collect any location data or personal data from your phone. The COVID Alert apps do not use GPS location data. The Exposure Notification System uses Bluetooth Low Energy technology to detect when another phone with the same app is within six feet. Proximity is measured, but not geographic location. COVID Alert app users must explicitly choose to turn on exposure notifications – and can turn it off at any time.

After downloading the app, users must opt-in to receive “Exposure Notifications.” When the app senses a close contact, your phone will exchange a secure random code with the close contact’s phone. Of note, your location, name or personally identifiable data are never disclosed. If you test positive for COVID-19, a public health representative from the local health department will call as part of the states’ contact tracing programs and ask if you are willing to anonymously notify your “close contacts” by uploading your app’s anonymous close contact codes. Each day, the app will compare your list of close contact codes to the list of codes associated with positive COVID-19 app users. If there’s a match, you will get an Exposure Alert, along with appropriate next steps to stay safe and prevent community spread like self-quarantining and getting tested. COVID Alert apps never reveal the identity of the COVID-19 positive individual.

The COVID Alert NJ app will work in conjunction with similar apps in Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania, allowing New Jerseyans to continue to receive exposure notifications when exposed to residents of those states. If a New Jersey resident travels to one of those states and is exposed to someone with COVID-19 who has an equivalent app, the resident will receive a notification.

COVID Alert NJ and COVID Alert NY provide users with the latest information about COVID-19 in their states, including publicly reported testing data. In addition, the app features a symptom checker where users can anonymously record daily symptoms.

COVID Alert NJ and COVID Alert NY were created with software developer NearForm.

“COVID-19 knows no borders, and COVID Alert NJ will help us break the chain of transmission,” said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. “COVID Alert NJ helps expand our contact tracing efforts, along with our neighboring states, in battling the pandemic, particularly among young adults, and also protects privacy and data. The greater the participation, the more effective COVID Alert NJ will be in helping all of us to beat this virus.”

"Built with privacy at its core, the COVID Alert app puts power in people’s hands to fight against COVID-19. In using open source peer-reviewed technology, interoperable with Pennsylvania and Delaware, the States of New York and New Jersey will allow citizens to engage, protect each other and break transmission chains. This privacy preserving approach has already been successfully rolled out across borders in Ireland and parts of the UK,” said Cian O Maidin, CEO, NearForm.

Visit covid19.nj.gov/app for more information about COVID Alert NJ.

Visit ny.gov/covidalerts for more information about COVID Alert NY.

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