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N.J. cops have broken up more than a dozen illegal gatherings across the state, police say

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Police have broken up 13 illegal gatherings across ten New Jersey counties, acting Superintendent of the State Police Patrick Callahan said Thursday.

Six disorderly persons offenses were issued, he said, and officials stressed that they will continue to crack down on anyone violating the governor's stay-at-home order — including people breaking other laws amid the coronavirus pandemic.

For example, a person recently charged for driving while intoxicated in Camden County was also hit with a disorderly persons charge for being on the road without a good reason, state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said Thursday.

"We think that was a way to use this charge to send a message," Grewal told NJ Advance Media. "If you're out there engaged in criminal activity, technically, by definition you're in violation of the governor's orders."

Cops can file additional charges against you for being outside or gathering with others, he said, including endangerment and causing risk of widespread injury or damage.

Each charge can put you behind bars for up to six months, according to state law.

Grewal told cops last week that prosecutors will be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to give advice about violations of the governor's orders.

On Saturday, more than 30 people were kicked out of a house party in Penns Grove, according to Grewal's office, and police charged the 37-year-old host with a disorderly persons offense.

Officers have also broken up large gatherings in Lakewood, including weddings, but Grewal said that town was not an outlier. Several counties have had multiple violations, he said. Some people have also used those incidents to spew bigotry toward Jewish residents, Gov. Phil Murphy said Thursday at a press conference, because Lakewood has a large Orthodox population.

Outside the state, there have been reports of parties in Kentucky spreading the virus.

"Anybody who has a 'corona party' in this state: We will crash your party and you will pay a price," Murphy said.