

A surge in gun violence across cities across New York led Gov. Andrew Cuomo to declare a state of emergency Tuesday.

The move, which Cuomo called a disaster emergency, means New York can bolster its law enforcement presence in cities where the shootings are on the rise and put additional state resources to crime-ridden areas, he said.

Additionally, he said a new gun-violence prevention office will be established within the state Health Department, require police agencies to better report where the shootings are happening and establish a new council on gun violence reduction.

The Democratic governor said the state's future is predicated on its ability to curb gun violence, noting it largely hits communities of color and calling it a "statewide problem."

"This is the state when we see an injustice, we don't look the other way. We stand up and fight it," Cuomo said during a speech at John Jay College in Manhattan.

Cuomo's announcement comes amid a surge nationwide in gun violence. President Joe Biden has called for a national crime prevention policy to cut down on shootings.

In New York, shootings in its major cities were up 40% last year compared to 2019 as the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, state data showed.

Cuomo said more people died from shootings in New York over the July 4th weekend than of COVID: 51 shooting deaths compared to 13 COVID deaths.

The problem is found in New York City as well as upstate and suburban cities. Rochester on pace for a historically deadly year, with 38 homicides already, with the latest being a 16-year-old teenager on Sunday; it's most was 70 in 1993.

Nationally, homicides are up 18% year-over-year in major U.S. cities, and that's after 2020 brought the largest single-year increase ever recorded, according to the national data site AH Datalytics.

The increase in shootings come as other crimes - such as rape, robbery and larceny - are all down, with statewide totals last year at their lowest since at least 2015, records show.

Cuomo said the goal is to focus on the hot spots where the shootings are happening and also developing new job-training programs to help communities out of poverty.

"You know where it's coming from. You know where you need to go," Cuomo said of the shootings.

Cuomo said New York will invest \$57 million into job-development programs.

Cuomo displayed maps that showed only small parts of cities in New York are where most of the homicides are. He cited state statistics that showed about 4,000 youth aged 18 to 24 accounted for 49% of the cities' shootings.

He said the state will boost State Police's efforts to fight illegal guns coming into New York in coordination with neighboring states.

In Yonkers, there were 26 people shot last year - the most since 28 were injured by gunfire in 2017, data show. Cuomo said shootings were up 38% in New York City.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio on Tuesday recognized the increase in shootings and murder in recent months, but said the city is seeing improvement: Shooting were down 20% in June compared to the same period in 2020.

"Look, we have a long way to go, but we saw some

real progress," de Blasio said, citing expanded police efforts and reforms.

"All of these pieces are starting to work together."