

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA June 30, 2021

Note: With the reopening of the state, this will be EKA's last COVID-19 update. The last year and a half will be remembered for its challenges. We appreciate that so many people have shown resilience in managing the difficulties and confusion which COVID-19 brought about and we hope that our updates have helped explain the constantly changing landscape. Everyone at EKA hopes you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy.

REOPENING

Reopening California

California is moving Beyond the Blueprint to safely and fully reopen the economy. As of June 15, 2021, the Governor terminated the executive orders that put into place the Stay Home Order and the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. He also phased out the vast majority of executive actions put in place since March 2020 as part of the pandemic response, leaving a subset of provisions that facilitate the ongoing recovery. The new [public health order](#) effective June 15 supersedes all prior health orders. The order has limited restrictions, only related to masking and mega-events, as well as settings serving children and youth pending an expected update to the K-12 schools guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. See what's changed since June 15th [here](#).

VACCINATION/MASKS

L.A. County Urges Everyone To Wear Masks Indoors As Delta Variant Spreads

With the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus continuing to spread statewide, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is recommending that all residents wear masks in public indoor spaces — regardless of whether they've been vaccinated for COVID-19

Nearly All COVID Deaths In US Are Now Among Unvaccinated

Nearly all COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. now are in people who weren't vaccinated, a staggering demonstration of how effective the shots have been and an indication that deaths per day — now down to under 300 — could be practically zero if everyone eligible got the vaccine. An Associated Press analysis of available government data from May shows that "breakthrough" infections in fully vaccinated people accounted for fewer than 1,200 of more than 853,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations. That's about 0.1%. And only about 150 of the more than 18,000 COVID-19 deaths in May were in fully vaccinated people. That translates to about 0.8%, or five deaths per day on average.

LA County Urges Employers To Verify Workers' Vaccine Status Despite Honor System

Saying COVID-19 is now “a pandemic of unvaccinated people,” Los Angeles County’s public health director urged employers on Monday, June 21, to verify workers’ vaccination status to determine if they should be wearing masks at work, despite the state allowing a self-attestation honor system. ... Under rules approved by the state last week, vaccinated workers do not have to wear masks in the workplace, but those who are unvaccinated must continue wearing face coverings. Employers are required to document the vaccination status of workers, however, those workers are allowed to simply “self-attest” that they are vaccinated, rather than providing actual documentation. But the rules also allow employers to require their workers to provide documentation of their vaccination status. If a worker refuses to provide it, the person will be considered unvaccinated and required to wear a face covering at the workplace.

S.F. Will Require All City Workers To Be Vaccinated. Those Who Don't Could Be Fired

San Francisco will require all 35,000 city employees to be vaccinated against the coronavirus once a vaccine receives full approval from the Food and Drug Administration, city officials said Wednesday. The new policy makes San Francisco the first city or county in California — and probably the U.S. — to mandate COVID vaccinations for all government employees. San Francisco previously announced that it will require employees to be vaccinated in high-risk settings, including hospitals, nursing homes and jails, regardless of whether they work for the city. The new policy will mandate vaccinations for all city employees, from police and firefighters to Muni operators and City Hall clerks and custodians. It does not cover teachers, who are school district employees.

3 In 5 Californians Now At Least Partially Vaccinated Against COVID-19

Three in five Californians, or 60.5%, have now received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, federal figures show — the latest milestone in the state’s rollout. The picture is even rosier when looking at only those currently eligible to roll up their sleeves. More than 70% of residents 12 and older are partially vaccinated at this point, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The latest numbers, although improving, show the Golden State still has a ways to go in its vaccination efforts. Fewer than half of all Californians (48.6%), and about 57% of those eligible to receive a shot, are fully inoculated — meaning millions more doses will need to be administered before the state reaches the level of vaccine coverage often cited as necessary to achieve long-lasting herd immunity against the coronavirus.

California Now Averaging Fewer Than 100,000 Daily COVID Vaccinations

California's rate of vaccination against COVID-19 keeps slowing down, with more than a quarter of eligible residents still not vaccinated. California is averaging 91,783 daily shots as of Thursday, according to data from the state's Department of Public Health. That's a 26 percent decline from the previous week's average, and a significant drop from April 24, when the state was averaging 365,686 daily shots. California's daily vaccination average increased slightly shortly after introducing its vaccine lottery, which included cash prizes for inoculated residents. So far, 71 percent of Californians 12 and older — those eligible for a shot — have received at least one dose and 57 percent are fully inoculated, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among residents 65 and older, nearly 93 percent have at least one dose and about 75 percent are fully inoculated.

Mixing Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines provides strong protection, according to a preliminary study.

Early results from a British vaccine study suggest that mixing different brands of vaccines can provoke a protective immune response against Covid-19. In the trial, volunteers produced high levels of antibodies and immune cells after getting one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and one dose of the AstraZeneca-Oxford shot. Administering the vaccines in either order is likely to provide potent protection, Matthew Snape, a vaccine expert at the University of Oxford, said at a news conference on Monday.

SACRAMENTO

New Mask Rules For California Capitol Require Face Coverings For All In Some Settings

California lawmakers, legislative staff and public visitors will still be required to wear face coverings in certain areas of the Capitol regardless of vaccination status, according to internal memos sent on Tuesday to members and employees. Everyone must wear face coverings in common areas like elevators, hallways, stairs, restrooms, committee rooms and the Senate and Assembly chambers. The Assembly won't require social distancing in committee rooms, the Assembly chamber or gallery and in vehicles, but the Senate will maintain that spacing in the gallery and in committee rooms.

California Issued Millions In COVID Fines. Employers Have Paid Almost None Of Them

By April 2021, inspectors with California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, better known as Cal-OSHA, had ordered roughly \$4.6 million in fines for wrongdoing related to the COVID-19 in some 200 workplaces. But behind the scenes at the state's workplace safety agency, California employers and their lawyers have filed an onslaught of appeals, delayed paying their fines and sought deals to pay next to nothing, a Sacramento Bee review of Cal-OSHA fines and payment data found. Violations generally

fell into three categories: failing to maintain proper safety and training plans, lacking protective equipment such as masks or plexiglass barriers, and blowing past deadlines to inform regulators of coronavirus deaths — if they did so at all. ... More than a year since inspectors noted some of those violations, employers have paid only about 3% of the total charges, according to the financial data, which the state compiled in response to a Public Records Act request from The Bee. The reason? Among all of the employers fined more than \$10,000, four out of five of them have pushed back against their citations. That effectively hit the pause button on any payment.

Newsom, Lawmakers Reach Agreement On Spending Tax Windfall In \$262.6-Billion State Budget

Gov. Gavin Newsom and Democratic leaders of the California Legislature reached an agreement on a \$262.6-billion state budget, divvying up a towering windfall of tax revenue for public schools, COVID-19 pandemic relief and a sweeping effort to address homelessness. The compromise — reached less than a week before the state's new fiscal year begins July 1 — came after 11 days of haggling among the state's top Democrats, negotiations that began after legislators approved a placeholder budget that met their constitutional deadline for action and avoided the forfeiture of a portion of their salaries. But legislative staff members emphasized that the announcement was not a final budget, saying a few issues remain outstanding.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County To Extend Countywide Residential Eviction Moratorium Through September 30, 2021

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors extended the Countywide eviction moratorium through September 30, 2021. The County's eviction moratorium is applicable as the baseline requirement for both the County's unincorporated areas and incorporated cities. The moratorium bars landlords in the county from evicting tenants who cannot pay their rent because of financial burdens related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NATIONAL

Can Congress Take Back California's COVID Relief? Senators Want To Try In Infrastructure Deal

California officials say they not only need the federal COVID money Washington has been sending since the pandemic drove the economy into a tailspin last year, but most has already been spent or is being included in the budget for fiscal 2021-22, which

begins July 1. The state has received about \$184.2 billion, according to the federal government's Pandemic Response Accountability Committee. In Washington, a group of 21 senators from both parties is in serious talks to craft an infrastructure spending plan they say would "repurpose" unspent federal COVID relief dollars that states have been receiving. Details are being negotiated, but among the ideas is to have states use their uncommitted COVID relief funds for roads, bridges and other such projects. ... California has an estimated \$45.3 billion in yet to be spent COVID money, according to the federal pandemic oversight tracker. Much of the unspent money is designated for education, unemployment benefits, Medicaid and disaster relief. The unemployment funds involve money that "California spends over time, so that money isn't really available to be repurposed or rescinded," said Michael Farquharson, policy analyst at the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

FDA Poised To Add Vaccine Heart Warnings For Young People

Federal health regulators anticipate adding warnings for the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines in light of reports of heart inflammation in a small number of adolescents and young adults after vaccination. The Food and Drug Administration will "move rapidly" to include the warnings of possible vaccine-induced heart inflammation on fact sheets for health care providers and recipients, the FDA's Dr. Doran Fink said Wednesday during a public meeting of the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices. The committee advises the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on vaccine policy. Regulators did not indicate any plans to change federal rules allowing the vaccines to be given to children as young as 12, saying the dangers of heart inflammation were small compared with the risks from contracting COVID-19.

EMPLOYER ISSUES

Five Key Issues To Understand About Cal/OSHA's Revised ETS Effective June 17, 2021

As [Anthony Zaller](#) from Zaller Law previous wrote about [here](#), on June 17, 2021, the Board for Cal/OSHA approved revisions to the Emergency Temporary Standards ("ETS") that govern employer's duties to fight COVID-19. The Governor signed an Executive Order making the revised ETS effective the same day. On June 18, [Cal/OSHA published FAQs regarding the new revised ETS](#). Here are five key issues employers should understand about the newly published FAQs:

Important Changes Under the Revised ETS

The FAQs explain some of the changes made by the June ETS from the original November 2020 ETS. Some of these changes include:

- Fully vaccinated employees without symptoms do not need to be tested or quarantined after close contacts with COVID-19 cases unless they have symptoms.
- No face covering requirements outdoors (except during outbreaks), regardless of vaccination status, though workers must be trained on CDPH recommendations for outdoor use of face coverings.
- Employers may allow fully vaccinated employees not to wear face coverings indoors, but must document their vaccination status (see below for more details about documenting employee status)
- No physical distancing or barrier requirements regardless of employee vaccination status with the following exceptions:
- Employers must evaluate whether it is necessary to implement physical distancing and barriers during an outbreak (3 or more cases in an exposed group of employees)

Employers must implement physical distancing and barriers during a major outbreak (20 or more cases in an exposed group of employees)

2. Documenting Vaccination Status

The FAQs note that the revised ETS requires employers to document employee's vaccination status, but does not set forth how employers are supposed to document vaccination status and what steps must be taken to document status. FAQs provide the following are acceptable options:

- Employees provide proof of vaccination (vaccine card, image of vaccine card or health care document showing vaccination status) and employer maintains a copy.
- Employees provide proof of vaccination. The employer maintains a record of the employees who presented proof, but not the vaccine record itself.
- Employees self-attest to vaccination status and employer maintains a record of who self-attests.

The FAQs also provide employers are not required to have employees submit proof of being vaccinated. The FAQs then state the employees have the right to decline to state if they have been vaccinated or not, and then employers must treat these employees as unvaccinated "and must not take disciplinary or discriminator action against the employee." This guidance set forth in the FAQs seems contrary to the DFEH's guidance that employers may require employees to be vaccinated. Logically, if employers can require employees to be vaccinated, they should also have the ability to ask for proof of vaccination.

3. Testing Offered To Employees

The FAQs explain that employers must offer testing at no cost to employees during paid time to:

Symptomatic unvaccinated employees, regardless of whether there is a known exposure. This is a new requirement.

- Unvaccinated employees after an exposure.
- Vaccinated employees after an exposure if they develop symptoms.
- Unvaccinated employees in an outbreak.
- All employees in a major outbreak.

4. When Employers Must Provide Respirators

The FAQs explain that employers must provide respirators to employees under two circumstances:

- To any unvaccinated employee who works with others indoors or in a vehicle and who requests one and
- Where there is a major outbreak (defined as 20 or more cases in an exposed group of employees), to any employees in the exposed group for voluntary use.

5. Requirements Still in Place Under the November 2020 ETS

Employers are reminded that these revised ETS change some requirements for employers, but there are many requirements that are still in place under the November 2020 ETS that employers must follow. Some of these requirements include:

- An effective written COVID-19 Prevention Program.
- Providing effective training and instruction to employees on the employer's prevention plan and their rights under the ETS.
- Providing notification to public health departments of outbreaks.
- Providing notification to employees of exposure and close contacts.
- Requirements to [offer testing](#) after potential exposures.
- Requirements for responding to COVID-19 cases and outbreaks.
- Quarantine and exclusion pay requirements.
- Basic prevention requirements for employer-provided housing and transportation.

As Businesses Re-Open in California, COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Continues

For ease of reference, the article by [Jennifer S. Grock](#) from the law firm Jackson Lewis is copied below. While the past week brought many changes around California for COVID-19 requirements, both the state statute and several local supplemental paid sick leave ordinances persist. The [statewide COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave](#) ("SPSL") law

remains in effect until September 30, 2021. As a reminder, under the state SPSL, employees are entitled to leave for the following reasons:

- The employee is subject to a quarantine or isolation period related to COVID-19;
- The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
- The employee is attending an appointment to receive a vaccine for protection against COVID-19;
- The employee is experiencing symptoms related to a COVID-19 vaccine that prevents the employee from being able to work or telework;
- The employee is experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19 and seeking medical diagnosis;
- The employee is caring for a family member who is subject to a quarantine or isolation order or has been advised to self-quarantine;
- The employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 on the premises.

Similarly, many local ordinances also remain in effect, and so employers should be aware of the local ordinances applicable to their business. There may be overlap under the local ordinances with the statewide obligations.

Locality	Expires
Long Beach (City)	Based upon City Council determination.
Los Angeles (City)	Until 2 calendar weeks after the expiration of the COVID-19
Los Angeles (County – unincorporated areas only)	Shall be in effect until two calendar weeks after the expiration by the Board of Supervisors.
Marin (County – unincorporated areas only)	September 30, 2021
Oakland (City)	Shall expire after the expiration of Oakland’s Declaration of
Sacramento (City)	June 30, 2021

San Jose (City)	June 30, 2021
Sacramento (City)	September 30, 2021
Santa Rosa (City)	September 30, 2021
Sonoma (County -unincorporated areas only)	September 30, 2021

Marin and Sonoma County are the most recent localities to issue or expand their supplemental paid sick leave ordinances. Marin applies to employers with 25 or fewer employees. However, the reasons for which paid leave may be taken, and the amount of supplemental paid sick leave provided, mirror the statewide law. Sonoma County similarly extended the expiration date of its supplemental paid sick leave ordinance, but also provided a new bank of time retroactive to January 1, 2021.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Firm's Covid-19 Coverage Suit Doomed By Virus Exclusion

A Missouri federal judge has thrown away a St. Louis law firm's COVID-19 business coverage interruption suit, freeing a Hartford unit from having to pay for Hais Hais and Goldberger PC's pandemic-related losses. U.S. District Judge David D. Noce granted Sentinel Insurance Co.'s dismissal motion on Monday, saying a virus exclusion unambiguously bars coverage to the law firm's alleged losses from the COVID-19 outbreak and government shutdown orders. The law firm first sued Sentinel in Missouri state court after the insurer refused to cover Hais' insurance claim in April 2020. Sentinel later moved the case to federal court. Hais held an all commercial property policy and has claimed COVID-19 and government orders caused physical damage and loss to its property and interrupted its business operation. Sentinel has argued the policy's virus exclusion unambiguously precludes all losses related to COVID-19, while the firm has maintained that the exclusion attached to the policy's "special property coverage form" only applies to computers and media-related properties.

WHAT WE'RE READING

California To Extend Eviction Moratorium To Sept. 30, Cover 100% Of Unpaid Rent For Eligible Tenants

Coming down to the wire, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and lawmakers announced an agreement Friday to extend the state's eviction moratorium and increase payments for unpaid rent.

Newsom signed legislation last year banning evictions for renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. He previously extended those protections, but they were set to expire June 30. Now the moratorium will last through September 30, though renters will need to file paperwork with their landlord and pay 25% of back rent if they don't qualify for rental assistance. To read the full story, click [here](#).

L.A. County Extends COVID-19 Eviction Moratorium Through September

Gov. Gavin Newsom is expected to announce an agreement later this week with legislative leaders for an extension of the state's eviction moratorium, which expires June 30. But Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, who authored Tuesday's motion, said the county could not wait for the state to act. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Yes, Gov. Gavin Newsom Has The Authority To Continue California's State Of Emergency, Legal Experts Say

A state of emergency must be ended by the governor or by concurrent resolution in the state Legislature at "the earliest possible date that conditions warrant," according to the law. Legal experts say the law gives public officials broad discretion to determine when it is appropriate to end a state of emergency.

Experts said Newsom is likely continuing the state of emergency so that he can reimpose restrictions if COVID-19 cases spike. A state of emergency declaration also allows officials to access state resources and receive federal assistance, which could aid California's reopening efforts. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Illicit Covid-19 Drugs Bound For Mexico Seized By U.S. Authorities

Federal authorities have seized at U.S. airports unauthorized versions of the Covid-19 treatment remdesivir destined for distribution in Mexico, the latest effort by the government to root out criminal activity related to the pandemic. Counterfeit or generic versions of remdesivir, an antiviral manufactured by Gilead Sciences Inc., are arriving in the U.S. by plane from Bangladesh and India and being smuggled by individuals to Mexico for patients willing to pay top dollar for the drugs, people familiar with the investigation said. In recent months, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers have captured more than 100 shipments that they referred to U.S. Department of Homeland Security special agents for further investigation, according to the people. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Antibodies Appear To Wane Rapidly, So Prepare For Booster Shots, Study Suggests

The good news: If you've had COVID-19, you may need only one Pfizer or Moderna shot to get the formidable protection "COVID-naïve" people get with two. The perhaps not-so-good news: It took just three months for antibodies to the virus' spike protein to wane by some 90 percent — meaning booster shots are likely on the horizon. In a peer-reviewed study published June 23 in the journal ACS Nano, UCLA researchers compared the immune responses of people who recovered from COVID-19 infections and then got the two-shot series, with those who never had COVID-19 and got the two-shot series. ... A large-scale study by UC Irvine researchers in the spring found that mRNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna provided much greater protection against COVID-19 than did natural infection alone. To read the full story, click [here](#).

CDC: COVID Still Greater Risk Than Vaccine To Teens

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention experts said Wednesday that COVID-19 vaccines remain far less risky to youths than the disease itself, despite rare but concerning reports of heart inflammation in some teens and young adults after getting the shots. "Currently, the benefits still clearly outweigh the risks for COVID-19 vaccination in adolescents and young adults," Dr. Sara Oliver of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases told an expert advisory panel, citing conclusions of a CDC work group. The CDC's Vaccine Safety Technical Work Group found that the data suggested a "likely association" between Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and heart inflammation in younger people. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, a 15-member panel of doctors from around the country, considered the latest update on the reports of the heart conditions known as myocarditis and pericarditis as well as the risks and benefits of vaccinating youths, but took no formal action. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Downward U.S. Jobless Claims Trend Stalls Out

A recent downward trend in worker filings for jobless benefits stalled in mid-June amid other signs the labor market continues to gradually recover. The Labor Department reported Thursday that initial unemployment claims, a proxy for layoffs, moved slightly lower last week to a seasonally adjusted 411,000 from an upwardly revised 418,000 the prior week, when claims rose. The four-week average for claims, which smooths out volatility in the weekly figures, rose slightly off a pandemic low to 397,750. While last week's initial claims were higher than projected and claims overall remain above pre-pandemic levels, their downward trajectory, along with a pickup in hiring, a declining unemployment rate and optimistic consumer sentiment, points to gains for the U.S. labor market. Claims are down sharply from the depths of the Covid-19-induced

downturn during 2020, and are hovering at levels half of what they were in January this year. Weekly claims totals are down more than 40% from the 742,000 total posted the week ended April 3. To read the full story, click [here](#).

The C.D.C. Extends The National Moratorium On Evictions Through July 31

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday approved a one-month extension of the national moratorium on evictions, scheduled to expire on June 30, but administration officials said this will be the final time they push back the deadline. The moratorium, instituted by the C.D.C. last September to prevent a wave of evictions spurred by the economic downturn associated with the coronavirus pandemic, has significantly limited the economic damage to renters and sharply reduced eviction filings. On Thursday, the C.D.C. director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky signed the extension, which goes through July 31, after a week of internal debate at the White House, which has been under pressure from tenants rights groups pushing for a longer extension. To read the full story, click [here](#).

One Nevada Church Settles, Other Pressing COVID-19 Lawsuit

The state has agreed to pay \$175,000 in legal fees to settle a lawsuit with a rural Nevada church over COVID-19 capacity caps on religious gatherings that a U.S. appeals court found illegal in December. But while no COVID-19 restrictions have been in place since June 1, a second church in Las Vegas is continuing to press for a federal court order declaring Gov. Steve Sisolak's earlier limits unconstitutional. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Manhattan Cafe Can't Pursue COVID Class Coverage Suit

A Manhattan cafe's losses arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic and government shutdown orders weren't caused by a "direct physical loss" to property, a New York federal judge ruled Wednesday, throwing out a proposed class suit against [XL Insurance America Inc.](#) U.S. District Judge P. Kevin Castel held that "direct physical loss" requires a tangible loss, which doesn't include restrictions against certain uses like the government orders that forced Cafe du Soleil, a family-owned restaurant, to close indoor service during the COVID-19 pandemic to curb the spread of the coronavirus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Highly Contagious Delta Coronavirus Variant Spreading Fast In California

The Delta coronavirus variant is now the third-most common in California, new data show, underscoring the danger of the highly contagious strain to people who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19. The variant makes up 14.5% of California coronavirus cases analyzed so far in June, up from 4.7% in May, when it was the fourth-

most identified variant in California, according to data released by the California [Department of Public Health](#). To read the full story, click [here](#).

Study: Moderna, Pfizer Vaccines Likely Induce 'Persistent' Immunity to COVID-19

Vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna mount a "persistent" immune response to COVID-19, according to a new study. The [study](#), published Monday in the journal Nature, adds to a growing body of evidence that the protection from the virus induced by the vaccines could be long-lasting. It may mean that booster shots for the mRNA coronavirus vaccines aren't needed anytime soon. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Governor To Weigh Budget That Nixes Pandemic Cuts

In some ways, the new spending plan approved by the California Legislature on Monday is about going backward: Back to a time before the pandemic, when California's roaring economy fueled budget surpluses. The \$262.6 billion proposal now on its way to Gov. Gavin Newsom's desk would restore spending cuts to public schools, colleges and universities, the courts, child support services and state worker salaries — all things that were cut last year when state officials thought they were facing a record budget deficit because of the coronavirus. Instead, state revenues soared by more than 27%, the biggest year-over-year increase in more than four decades. That includes roughly \$100 billion in new money, both from a state surplus and coronavirus aid from the federal government. It's so much money that the state plans to give rebates of up to \$1,100 to more than 15 million households while also pledging to pay for every 4-year-old to go to kindergarten for free and guaranteeing government-funded health coverage for low-income immigrants 50 and older living in the country illegally. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Newsom Signs Into Law Extension Of California Eviction Protections, Rent Relief

California tenants will be protected from evictions for another three months, and those with low incomes will have all of their past-due rent paid by the state, under a bill signed Monday by Gov. Gavin Newsom in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The governor acted just hours after both houses of the Legislature approved the bill extending the eviction protections through Sept. 30. Lawmakers cited urgency stemming from the expiration of previous protections that was set for Wednesday. "California will significantly increase cash assistance to low-income tenants and small landlords under the state's \$5.2 billion rent relief program, making it the largest and most comprehensive COVID rental protection and rent relief program of any state in the nation," said a statement by Newsom's office. To read the full story, click [here](#).

The New 'Delta-Plus' Coronavirus Variant Has Been Identified. What Does That Mean?

The Delta variant of the coronavirus has spawned a variant of its own that has gained considerable attention since being dubbed “Delta-plus” in India. It is slightly different from the original Delta variant that also was first identified in India. The original Delta variant is perhaps twice as transmissible as other strains of the coronavirus — meaning unvaccinated people are more likely to become infected if they are exposed to it. The United Kingdom was forced to delay a new phase of reopening its economy as the variant began to spread among unvaccinated people there, causing an uptick in cases and hospitalizations. Delta’s contagiousness is obvious cause for concern. But what about Delta-plus? Statements issued by the Indian government say the characteristics of Delta-plus also include increased transmissibility. But it’s unclear whether the strain is more transmissible than the regular Delta variant. Scientists in California say there isn’t enough evidence to suggest that Delta-plus is any more problematic than the original Delta. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Previous Updates

Our previous COVID-19 updates can be found [here](#). Feel free to share our updates with friends and colleagues. We hope you find the information in the EKA updates and the questions they raise to be informative. If you have any COVID-19 government or communications questions, please reach out to any EKA team members.