

COVID-19 Update From EKA – July 1, 2020

Stay At Home Order Day 104

Today is day 104 of the [statewide "Stay-at-Home" Order](#). 112 days ago, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a Pandemic. Safer at Home orders have been in place in Los Angeles since March 19.

Previous EKA COVID-19 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 member of the EKA team. If you have a specific COVID-19 question, click [here](#) and we will attempt to answer it in our update.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Closing Time Again For Bars

Los Angeles County was ordered by the Governor to close all bars in Los Angeles County. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health amended the Health Order to require that all bars, breweries, brewpubs, pubs, wineries, and tasting rooms close unless they are offering sit-down dine-in meals. This includes closing bar areas in restaurants. According to L.A. County Public Health, there has been a sharp increase in new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. The timing of these increases is in line with the reopening of key sectors, including bars, which are places where people remove their face coverings to drink while they may be socializing with people not in their households. The bar-closure directive follows a revised Health Officer [Order](#) on June 18 from L.A. County Public Health, which had eased restrictions on certain businesses and activities. To view the State's Guidance for bars, click [here](#). To view the County press release, click [here](#). To view the current Health Officer Order, click [here](#).

Another Virus Victim: July 4 Weekend

Los Angeles County beaches will be closed to the public over the Fourth of July weekend, and all fireworks displays will be banned in an effort to prevent large gatherings that could lead to the spread of the Coronavirus. According to the county, all beaches, piers, parking lots, beach bike baths and beach access points will be closed beginning at 12:01 a.m. Friday and continuing until 5 a.m. Monday. It was not immediately clear if the city of Long Beach, which has its own health department, will issue a similar order closing its beaches. The county order does not apply to Long Beach. The L.A. County sheriff's Department's announced on social media that the County Order ``makes it illegal to trespass at these locations and is punishable by law to include, but not limited to, a \$1,000 fine." Beaches were closed at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, but they were later reopened for active uses only. On June 11, they were opened for more passive uses like sunbathing. Fireworks displays will also be banned over the holiday weekend.

L.A. County CEO Releases Dire Budget Revision

Los Angeles County's CEO released a dire revised budget proposal that envisions deep across-the-board cuts that could result in the elimination of more than 3,200 positions and 655 layoffs, more than half of which could affect the sheriff's Department. County CEO Sachi Hamai said the dramatic cuts are needed to counter a \$935.3 million budget shortfall, primarily due to severe revenue declines and increased expenses to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Significant cuts in county programs and personnel will be needed as a result of the serious economic downturn caused by this ongoing public health emergency. Hamai said there is still a chance some of the cuts could be reversed in September when a supplemental budget is developed when more is known about how much money the county may receive from the state and federal governments. The \$34.9 billion spending proposal includes \$453.5 million in department cuts and \$59.3 million in management reductions. Most notably, the budget plan calls for the elimination of 3,251 positions -- 2,596 of which are already vacant, but 655 of which will result in layoffs.

Industry Leaders Urge L.A. County To Keep Businesses Open

Industry leaders urged county officials to safely get more residents back to work and college students back to school. In a meeting of the county's Economic Resiliency Task Force, members warned that a lack of clarity about health guidelines or a repeated pattern of closing and then reopening businesses could cripple some sectors. Scaling back in the face of a surge of cases makes sense, said Linda Griego, who represents small business owners, but she warned against a broader rollback. The task force includes all five of the county supervisors. Representatives presented their detailed recommendations for safely managing an economic recovery of sectors including small businesses, commodities and goods movement, education, and infrastructure, development and construction. Leaders repeatedly said they were committed to prioritizing employee and customer health and expressed optimism about the willingness of individual players to follow whatever guidelines the county sets. Supervisor Kuehl said she has seen widespread noncompliance from businesses already up and running. Griego said more education and outreach is required to reach small business owners. A report on infrastructure and development listed \$100 billion in planned local projects. Fran Inman, senior vice president of Majestic Realty and former chair of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, said the list represents a considerable number of potential jobs. But many projects have been put on pause, some for lack of financing, she said, urging the county to consider creative public-private funding ideas for shovel-ready projects. There are \$2.5 billion worth of telecom projects budgeted for the county over the next 18-24 months that could provide an opportunity to train thousands of residents for new jobs Click [here](#) to view a copy of a comprehensive report reflecting the work of the various sectors and published by the Office of Emergency Management.

LOS ANGELES

Mask Citations

During the council's Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts and Recreation Committee meeting, Councilman Paul Koretz said about half the people he sees walking in public are not wearing masks. This despite orders from both Mayor Eric Garcetti and Gov. Gavin Newsom's

June requiring people to wear them at all times when outside the home. He asked to have the committee staff report back on ways of encouraging -- possibly through citations or other enforcement -- adherence to requirements that residents wear masks to prevent spread of the Coronavirus. Koretz said he favors developing a method for the city to issue citations to people who do not wear masks in public, but he also said he supports a public education campaign on the matter. The Los Angeles Police Department, mirroring other local law enforcement agencies, has said its goal is to have people voluntarily comply with public health directives, rather than resorting to punitive measures such as citations or fines. Police have reported some cases that rose to the level of trespassing when people refused to put on a mask inside a private business, according to a report from the Chief Legislative Analyst's office.

Temporary Rent Subsidy

The City Council approved an [Emergency Rental Assistance Subsidy Program](#), and last week Mayor Garcetti signed it into law. This program will provide a temporary rent subsidy for tenants who live in the City of Los Angeles and are unable to pay rent due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents whose household income is at or below 80% of the Area Median Income, which is \$83,500 for a family of 4, may be eligible. The City of Los Angeles will provide more information on this program soon, and aims to open the application portal in July.

City Budget

The City Council's Budget and Finance Committee voted recently to reduce the cut to the LAPD by about \$17 million and use most the money to stop possible furloughs of city employees, but the committee voted to restore the \$150 million reduction and use most of it for improving underserved areas and communities of color. This year's budget process for Los Angeles is unlike any other due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the City Council will vote on financial adjustments to a spending plan that's already in effect, as the fiscal year begins today. The entire Los Angeles 2020-2021 budget is about \$10.5 billion. According to city documents, based on May receipts, estimates from the Office of Finance, the Department of Transportation and information concerning sales and electricity users tax receipts show the city's revenue for 2019-2020 is estimated to be \$6.32 billion -- about \$253.5 million below the 2019-2020 proposed budget. Revenues in the 2021 fiscal year are difficult to forecast due to the pandemic, with the City Administrative Officer's staff reporting they could be about \$6.68 billion, but they also said they could be anywhere between \$45 million to \$409 million below that estimate. One of the red flags council members have brought up in committee meetings is the city's dwindling reserve funds that were used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As it stands, the city's reserves in the 2021 fiscal year are expected to be below the city's minimum target of 2.75% of the general fund, with about \$227 million remaining, but the council could vote to move funds from various departments and resources to raise the reserve fund to \$284 million, according to city documents. This is still well below the city's aspirations of having 5% in reserves across the board and lower than the almost 8% it had before the pandemic. The council is also slated to approve \$75 million in federal Coronavirus Aide, Relief and Economic Security Act to provide cash flow for the city's COVID-19

responses. After today's meeting, the City Council will be in recess through July 28, a mid-year break it takes every year.

Furloughs

The Los Angeles City Council has voted to delay intended furloughs of city staff to allow a voluntary retirement buyout process to take place. That approach could eliminate the need for furloughs or reduce them due to the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SACRAMENTO

Newsom Threatens California Counties

California counties must comply with state and federal COVID-19 rules if they want part of up to \$1 billion in funding through the state budget. The agreement Governor Newsom and legislative leaders reached allocates \$750 million to counties for social safety net programs. That amount could be increased to \$1 billion if the federal government sends California additional aid money that it has requested. The funding is contingent on counties following federal Guidance, the State's stay-at-home order and other directives laid out by the California Department of Public Health to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus that causes COVID-19. That includes the statewide mask order Newsom issued last week that requires people to wear masks in public. The Department of Public Health has also issued Guidance for businesses requiring them to implement social distancing and sanitation measures for staff and customers. The policy would put Newsom's Department of Finance in charge of determining whether counties are compliant.

\$1.2 Billion In Premium Savings

In response to Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara [ordering premium](#) relief to policyholders affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, California automobile insurance companies have agreed to provide \$1.21 billion in savings to drivers. That figure includes \$1.03 billion in premium relief for more than 18 million policyholders for the months of March, April, and May while Californians struggled during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and an additional \$180 million in future rate increases that insurance companies reduced in response to the Commissioner's orders. The premium relief per policy for the months of March through May as reported by the 25 largest insurance companies ranges from \$19 to \$155, depending on the cost of the policy and the company's formula for providing relief. The overall average relief per policy for the top 25 carriers is \$57 or 3.63 percent of a policyholder's annual premium. Approximately half the companies returned premium to drivers in the form of a refund or dividend, while the rest offered a credit against future premiums. Commissioner Lara also urged insurance companies to review their recently submitted rate filings in light of the COVID-19 emergency's effect on policyholders' risk. As a result, dozens of auto insurance rate filings pending review by the Department of Insurance were withdrawn or significantly reduced representing \$180 million in further savings for drivers compared to what insurers initially sought to charge consumers in the coming months. The submitted reports are on the Department of Insurance's website [here](#). In addition to the new data showing savings for California auto insurance consumers, Commissioner Lara issued a [Bulletin](#) extending his previous [Bulletin](#) for insurance companies to

provide premium relief for all lines of insurance for June. This new [Bulletin](#) recognizes that Californians continue to be impacted by COVID-19 and requires that insurance carriers continue to evaluate changes in risk to their policyholders and apply additional savings as warranted through the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seven More Weeks Of Unemployment Benefits

Millions of unemployed Californians could wind up with more weeks of jobless benefits as part of the budget deal Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders reached last week. The [legislation](#) would authorize up to seven extra weeks of federally-funded emergency benefits, for a total of 20 weeks, if the State's unemployment rate reaches a certain level considered the "high unemployment period" in the bill. That level would be hit if the average total unemployment rate reaches 8 percent for the most recent three months as determined by the U.S. Department of Labor, as well as other criteria. As a result, someone could get up to 59 weeks of benefits eventually, like this:

- 26 weeks from the State's regular benefit program.
- 13 weeks from the federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation law, passed earlier this year as a response to the surging unemployment triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. That benefit ends on December 31.
- 20 weeks from the federal emergency benefit program, including the seven authorized by the State's legislative action.

California residents are eligible for up to \$450 a week in benefits, and until late July, they can also receive an extra \$600 weekly. "The proposed change would maximize federal financial support available through the CARES Act, minimize costs on employers, and provide additional benefits on this extension for impacted workers," said Loree Levy, Employment Development Department spokeswoman. Currently, [California's Employment Development Department](#) has processed 6.3 million claims and paid out \$30.3 billion. Of that amount, \$797 million has gone to pay claims under the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program

CalChamber Adds SB 1383 To Job Killer List

The California Chamber of Commerce today announced that [SB 1383](#) has been identified as a job killer bill. The bill proposes a mandatory 12-week leave of absence on any employer with one or more employees and would overwhelmingly hurt the State's smallest employers. More than 85 associations that represent thousands of employers have joined CalChamber in opposing the measure. "Now is not the time to place costly burdens on employers who are struggling to reopen and rebuild," said Jennifer Barrera, CalChamber executive vice president. "To be clear, the bill is not limited in scope to only address COVID-19. It would disproportionately impact the smallest of employers in California at a time when they can least afford it. SB 1383 will put California's small businesses out of business." The bill is further deemed a job killer due to the threat of litigation it poses. SB 1383 includes a private right of action which will result in increased litigation costs for employers who must defend themselves in court even for unintentional mistakes. As written, the bill currently allows any employee to sue their boss if they believe the employer did not correctly administer the leave, interfered with the leave, or denied the leave. CalChamber's opposition also turns on the fact that SB 1383

will impose a significant administrative burden on employers and drive up their costs. Even though the leave prescribed in SB 1383 is unpaid, employers must still pay to train and hire temporary help to cover the workload of the employee who is on leave or pay overtime if they shift work to other workers. Further, the employer may also be required to maintain the health benefits of any employee out on an unpaid leave. Finally, CalChamber has also identified the fact that large employers will be seriously impacted by the proposal. For employers with 50 or more employees, SB 1383 will expand the amount of protected leave an employee may take to half a year. The measure changes requirements for qualifying for the California Family Rights Act (CFRA) leave by amending the definition of family member for whom the employee can take leave. This creates non-conformity between the Family and Medical Leave Act's (FMLA) and CFRA's qualifying requirements. As such, an employee who already took 12 weeks of leave under CFRA may also be able to qualify for a subsequent 12 weeks of leave under FMLA should the measure become law. A copy of CalChamber's letter in opposition can be found [here](#).

REOPENING

Public Health Provides Guidance for Employers

As businesses reopen, employers will almost certainly be faced with the potential of a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace. In addition to the [industry-specific Guidance](#) for reopening that the State of California has issued, the California Department of Public Health (the Department) recently issued [Guidance for employers](#) responding to a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace. The Guidance is intended to apply to all workplaces experiencing a workplace COVID-19 outbreak, exclusive of healthcare, congregate living, and other workplaces where the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Disease (ATD) standard applies to control possible exposures to COVID-19. Employers should note that an "outbreak" can be defined differently by local public health orders. Therefore, employers should familiarize themselves with how the term is defined in their workplace jurisdiction, as well as jurisdictions in which employees reside. To prepare for the possibility of an outbreak, employers also are encouraged to designate an infection prevention coordinator who will implement infection prevention procedures, develop mechanisms for tracking suspected and confirmed cases among employees, and ensure sick leave policies are generous and flexible enough to accommodate employees who must stay homesick.

The Department also advises employers should be prepared to share information with the local health department (LHD) should a known or suspected outbreak occur in the workplace. This can include notifying the LHD in the county where the positive employee resides—even if an employee resides in a jurisdiction outside of where the workplace is located. Employers may be asked to provide the LHD a roster of all employees in the jurisdiction where the workplace outbreak is occurring. The Department further recommends that employers communicate with the LHD on how frequently the LHD expects updates from the employer on newly identified cases and symptomatic employees in the workplace and during the outbreak. The Department states that, in the event of a workplace outbreak, testing all employees in the workplace should be the first strategy considered for the identification of additional cases when needed to control workplace spread of COVID-19. Testing should be done with the assistance of the LHD.

When testing is not available or recommended by the LHD, employers should consider alternative methods for controlling the outbreak, including contact tracing and advising close contacts of positive employees about home quarantine and isolation. The Guidance emphasizes that employers must maintain the confidentiality of employees with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection when communicating with other employees. In addition, employers are directed to familiarize themselves with the requirements of reporting employee cases to Cal/OSHA, including reporting COVID-19 inpatient hospitalizations and deaths among employees. The Guidance also indicates that as part of the outbreak management, the LHD may recommend a strategy to the employer for allowing employees to return to work following a confirmed COVID-19 exposure. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) most recent Guidance on return to work should be considered, a strategy that may be recommended by the LHD consists of the following:

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

DOJ Joins Dispute With Hawaii Over COVID-19 Order

The Department of Justice filed a statement of interest in Hawaii federal court in support of a lawsuit filed by residents of Nevada and California residents who own property in Hawaii challenging a measure by Governor David Ige in response to COVID 19 that mandates a 14-day self-quarantine for individuals entering Hawaii. The [Statement of Interest](#) is part of Attorney General Barr's [initiative](#) directing Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband for the Civil Rights Division, and the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, Matthew Schneider, to review state and local policies to ensure that civil liberties are protected during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The United States Constitution requires the government to protect the privileges and immunities of all citizens in our nation," said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband of the Civil Rights Division. "These privileges and immunities include the right of Americans to travel freely anywhere in our country, and state governments cannot limit the right of out-of-state Americans to travel to their State unless doing so is substantially related to protecting the public safety. The Department of Justice remains committed to defending the constitutional rights of all Americans no matter where they live. In its statement of interest, the United States explains that Hawaii's self-quarantine requirement effectively discriminates against out-of-state residents. Click [here](#) to read the memo.

Sleepaway Camp Operators Sue

A group of Jewish summer camp operators has filed a lawsuit against New York Governor Andrew Cuomo for his decision to keep overnight camps closed this summer due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Association of Jewish Camp Operators and a group of parents argue that the statewide closure of overnight camps is a violation of their "constitutional rights of the free exercise of religion and the fundamental rights of parents to control the religious education and upbringing of their children," the Times-Union reported. In the complaint, overnight camp operators contended that they intended to reopen with strict safety measures in place to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

Landlords Lose Challenge to Eviction Moratorium

New Yorkers with trouble making rent during the coronavirus pandemic have a couple more months of breathing room, with a federal judge [upholding](#) Governor Andrew Cuomo's eviction moratorium on Monday. "The world is navigating the deadliest pandemic in over a century," Chief U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon wrote in the grim opening lines of her 37-page ruling. "Presently, the United States has suffered more than any other country, reporting over two million cases of the novel Coronavirus known as Covid-19, and over 120,000 deaths as a result. Among the fifty states, New York has experienced the highest number of cases, with nearly 400,000 cases and 25,000 dead." As New York grappled with massive unemployment, Governor Cuomo issued [an order](#) forbidding landlords from opening up eviction proceedings for three months, relief he later [extended](#) until August 20.

NATIONAL

IRS Announces A Surprising Break For People Who've Taken An RMD In 2020

An update from [Allworth Financial](#) said that a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is a percentage of the balance of a qualified retirement account (such as a traditional IRA, 401(k), 403(b), etc.) that must be withdrawn starting the year the account holder reaches age 72. Simply, RMDs exist to guard against people using these accounts to avoid paying taxes. So, what did the IRS just do that has many people singing its praises? On June 23, 2020, the Internal Revenue Service announced "[IRS Notice 2020-51](#)," which stipulates that "All taxpayers who have taken a required minimum distribution (RMD) in 2020 (including those RMDs taken *before* the CARES Act was signed into law) from an eligible retirement account, now have the opportunity to roll those funds back into that retirement account by August 31, 2020." This would enable that money to continue to grow tax-deferred (for the time being, at least). According to Allworth, Before IRS Notice 2020-51, people who had taken an RMD could roll it back into their retirement account by July 15, 2020, but *only* under the condition that the 60-day rollover deadline fell between April 1, 2020, and July 15, 2020. Perhaps the surprising part of the announcement is that IRS Notice 2020-51 also includes [inherited IRAs](#), which generally require non-spouse beneficiaries (children, grandchildren, etc.) to begin taking RMDs from IRAs they inherit the year *following* the death of the original owner, regardless of their age. Again, a key distinction now is, that IRS Notice 2020-51 *retroactively serves* to cover people who took RMDs in January and February.

PPP Recipients Can Apply Early For Loan Forgiveness

New Paycheck Protection Program guidance released declares that PPP recipients can apply for loan forgiveness early but that doing so could cost them money. In a 34-page [interim final rule](#) (IFR) issued in consultation with Treasury, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) addresses a number of issues related to the PPP, which was created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, P.L. 116-136, to provide forgivable loans to small businesses, not-for-profits, and certain other entities hurt by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated government-imposed quarantines. Specifically, the new interim final rule makes revisions to previous Guidance to reflect the [Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020](#), and made significant changes to the PPP, most notably:

- Expanding to 24 weeks, from eight weeks, the covered period during which PPP loan recipients can spend the funds and still qualify for loan forgiveness. The 24-week period applies to all loans made on or after June 5. Borrowers that received loans before June 5 can choose to elect an eight-week period.
- Lowering to 60% from 75% the proportion of PPP funding that must be used on payroll costs to qualify for full forgiveness.
- Expanding the term for new loans to five years from two years. Borrowers with loans received before June 5 can extend their loan term to five years if their lender agrees.

People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness

The CDC has warned that everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus, but some people are more likely to become severely ill, which means they may require hospitalization, intensive care, a ventilator, or they may even die. Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at the highest risk. People of any age with certain underlying medical conditions are also at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To see the CDC document, click [here](#).

CDC Updates

- [Youth Sports Program FAQs](#)
- [Contact Tracing](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Animal Activities at Fairs, Shows, and Other Events](#)
- [What Bank Employees Need to Know about COVID-19](#)

QUESTIONS EKA HAS RECEIVED

Can you clarify Reporting Obligations for COVID-19 Illnesses?

As detailed reopening section above, [Guidance](#) issued by the California Department of Industrial Relations' Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) sets forward strict obligations for recording and reporting occupational injuries and illnesses for employees who contract COVID-19. The Guidance differs in some key aspects from Guidance issued by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). California employers must record work-related COVID-19 illnesses on their Log 300s that result in death, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, medical treatment beyond first aid, loss of consciousness, or a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other healthcare professional. An injury or illness is considered "work-related" if an event or exposure in the work environment either caused or contributed to the resulting condition or significantly aggravated a pre-existing injury or illness. Work-relatedness is generally presumed for injuries and illnesses resulting from events or exposures occurring in the work environment. The Guidance explains that a work-related exposure in the work environment for COVID-19 would include:

- Interaction with people known to be infected with COVID-19;
- Working in the same area where people known to have been carrying COVID-19 have been; or

- Sharing tools, materials, or vehicles with persons known to have been carrying COVID-19.
- If there is not a known exposure triggering the presumption of work-related illness, the Guidance provides factors employers should consider when determining whether an exposure is work-related:
 - The type, extent, and duration of contact the employee had at the work environment with other people, particularly the general public
 - Physical distancing and other controls that impact the likelihood of work-related exposure
 - Whether the employee had work-related contact with anyone who exhibits signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Employers may have to record COVID-19 cases on their Log 300s even if the employee does not have a positive test result. Cal/OSHA considers a positive test for COVID-19 determinative of recordability, but the Guidance acknowledges that there may be other situations, such as testing shortages, in which an employer must make a recordability determination even though the testing did not occur or the results are not available to the employer.

Employers are required to report any COVID-19 serious illness that occurs at work or in connection with work within eight hours. For example, if an employee becomes ill at work and requires hospitalization, that must be reported. Additionally, employers are required to report any serious injuries, illnesses, or deaths occurring at the worksite. This means that if an employee experiences a serious illness from COVID-19 while at work, it must be reported, even if the illness is not work-related. Finally, an employer should also report a serious illness if there is cause to believe the illness may be work-related, regardless of whether the onset of symptoms occurred at work.

WHAT WE'RE READING

Travelers From California Added To Quarantine Order In New York, New Jersey And Connecticut

California is one of 16 states on a quarantine list for three Northeast states, including hard-hit New York and New Jersey. The order means travelers from California to those states must quarantine for 14 days after arrival. New York's Governor says noncompliance may be deemed a violation of the public health law and subject to a civil penalty of up to \$10,000. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Restaurants Get A Lifeline With PPP Loan Forgiveness Changes

On Wednesday, the U.S. Senate passed the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act by unanimous consent, providing a much-needed lifeline for restaurants nationwide. The bill is now headed to the desk of President Donald Trump. There are several key changes operators have clamored for since the PPP came into play. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Hollowed Out Public Health System Faces More Cuts Amid Virus

The U.S. public health system has been starved for decades and lacks the resources to confront the worst health crisis in a century. Marshaled against a virus that has sickened at least 2.6 million in the U.S., killed more than 126,000 people and cost tens of millions of jobs and \$3 trillion in federal rescue money, State and local government health workers on the ground are sometimes paid so little that they qualify for public aid. They track the Coronavirus on paper records shared via fax. Working seven-day weeks for months on end, they fear pay freezes, public backlash and even losing their jobs. To read the full story, click [here](#).

This Smart Face Mask Can Talk To Your Phone And Amplify Your Voice

Face masks are here to stay for the foreseeable future as the world continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic. Japanese startup Donut Robotics has developed a way to turn the ubiquitous coronavirus face mask into the latest tech gadget. The c-mask isn't meant to be worn alone. You place the device over the top of your regular face mask. A Bluetooth connection to your phone lets you dictate messages or make calls. The system can also translate speech into different languages, a feature Donut originally developed for its Cinnamon robot. The translation feature will require a subscription. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Yes, Gov. Newsom Has The Authority To Make Masks Mandatory In California, Legal Experts Say

Gov. Newsom has broad authority under the California Emergency Services Act to issue health mandates during a pandemic. Two constitutional law experts said Newsom does, indeed, have the power to make face coverings mandatory under that act. They said unless face coverings are shown to be ineffective, Newsom's requirement should hold up against legal challenges. Top public health officials and recent studies say wearing a face covering is an effective measure for reducing the spread of COVID-19 when people gather. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Newsom: 'We Have To Enforce' If People Don't Wear Masks, Don't Stay Home

Gov. Gavin Newsom delivered an update on California's response to the Coronavirus from a Bay Area motel that's part of the homeless housing program Project Roomkey in Pittsburg, California. You can read highlights below or watch the full press conference above. To read the full story, click [here](#).

U.S. Inmates Got Virus Relief Checks, And IRS Wants Them Back

Hundreds of thousands of dollars in coronavirus relief payments have been sent to people behind bars across the United States, and now the IRS is asking state officials to help claw back the cash that the federal tax agency says was mistakenly sent. The legislation authorizing the payments during the pandemic doesn't specifically exclude jail or prison inmates, and the IRS has refused to say exactly what legal authority it has to retrieve the money. On its website, it points to the unrelated Social Security Act, which bars incarcerated people from receiving some types of old-age and survivor insurance benefit payments. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Feds Sent \$1.4B In Stimulus Checks To More Than 1 Million Dead People

More than a million Americans who had died received COVID-19 stimulus payments totaling \$1.4 billion, a government watchdog said in a report to Congress released Thursday, NBC News reported. The finding is part of a sweeping review of the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by the Government Accountability Office, an independent nonpartisan congressional agency. The report paints a clearer picture of what critics called a muddled rollout by the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury Department of more than 160 million payments worth \$269 billion. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Toxic Hand Sanitizer: FDA Warns Consumers To Avoid 9 Brands

The Food and Drug Administration released a warning statement on June 19 saying consumers should not buy hand sanitizer products from the Mexico-based manufacturer Eskbiochem. The warning comes after the FDA discovered methanol, or wood alcohol, in these products. Methanol can be dangerous when ingested or absorbed through the skin, and it can be fatal in large quantities. "Methanol is not an acceptable ingredient for hand sanitizers and should not be used due to its toxic effects," the FDA cautions in its letter. To read the full story, click [here](#).

How To Social Distance As Beauty Salons, Stores And Restaurants Reopen

The coronavirus pandemic is not showing signs of slowing down anytime soon, with 8 million cases now reported worldwide -- and the U.S. is leading in the total number of cases per country (with Brazil following close behind). Yet, states and businesses continue to reopen throughout the summer meaning there are more chances to potentially contract or infect others with the virus now that many are leaving their homes again. In many U.S. cities, there are still widespread school closures, many people are now working from home and countless businesses like restaurants, bars, coffee shops, fitness studios and gyms are remaining closed or limiting operations in an effort to keep people at home. To read the full story, click [here](#).

SEC Staff Guidance Addresses Pandemic-Related Disclosures

Public companies need to carefully consider their obligations in disclosing the coronavirus pandemic's effect on their operations, liquidity, and capital resources, according to staff guidance issued Tuesday by the SEC Division of Corporation Finance. The division is monitoring how companies are disclosing the effects and risks related to the pandemic on their businesses, financial condition, and operating results. The staff guidance has no legal force or effect, but it provides the views of the Division of Corporation Finance on pandemic-related issues. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Inside The U.S.'S Largest Maximum-Security Prison, Covid-19 Raged. Outside, Officials Called Their Fight A Success.

Inmates at Angola prison in Louisiana told ProPublica of widespread illness, dysfunctional care and deadly neglect as the coronavirus outbreak hit. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Chipotle Ranks No. 1 Among Qsrs For COVID-19 Safety Measures, Report Says

Chipotle ranks as the top restaurant brand for health and safety compliance during COVID-19, according to data from global market research firm Ipsos' Consumer Health & Safety Index email to Restaurant Dive. Ipsos mystery shoppers conducted in-store visits at over 5,700

retailers across the U.S. and assessed which brands were successfully implementing health and safety measures and which were not. Employees at 90% of the Chipotle locations visited were consistently wearing masks, while 83% of locations included employees wearing gloves. Further, 49% of Chipotle's locations have hand sanitizer available at the entrance and 82% have hand sanitizer available in restrooms. The industry average for the latter metric is just 24%. To read the full story, click [here](#).

MGM Resorts, Caesars Entertainment Will Now Require All Guests To Wear Masks

All guests inside Caesars Entertainment and MGM Resorts properties must now wear face coverings at all times unless they're eating or drinking. The mask policies applies to all Caesars and MGM Resorts properties open in Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York and Ohio, as well as tribal properties in Arizona, California and North Carolina. To read the full story, click [here](#).

4 SoCal Counties That Reopened Restaurants Early Now Lead Statewide COVID-19 Surge

Four of the first Southern California counties to reopen for dine-in restaurants and bars now lead the State in overall coronavirus hospitalization rates, reports the L.A. Times. The paper says the numbers coming out of Orange, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties show a "dangerous rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations," and that those areas are "primarily responsible" for a surge in overall cases statewide. Meanwhile, Los Angeles is now the leading center of the coronavirus outbreak in all of America. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Your Workplace After Coronavirus Reopenings: How Going Back To The Office Could Look

While the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage on, businesses are either in the process of reopening or are planning how they'll let employees back inside the building. The guidelines are clear if you work in an essential business like a restaurant or some other service or hospitality sector. But what about skyscrapers and other typical offices for 9-5 employees? To read the full story, click [here](#).

Face Mask Use: More Than 200,000 US COVID-19 Cases May Have Been Averted

Around the world, governments have been fighting the spread of COVID-19 through a mix of policies and mitigation measures such as the closure of schools and nonessential businesses, stay-at-home orders, and the use of face masks. In the United States, fifteen states and the District of Columbia have issued mandates for face mask use in public between April 8 and May 15, often generating public debate and noncompliance. [A new study](#), released as a Fast Track Ahead Of Print article by Health Affairs, estimates the effect of face cover mandates on the county-level COVID-19 growth rate by evaluating public data sets and reviewing all state orders issued between April 1 and May 21, 2020. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's Pandemic Pain Increases Sharply

COVID-19 cases in California are spiking dramatically — more than 6,600 new cases on Tuesday alone — and scientists predict California will double its transmission rate every four to five weeks. The State has reached Gov. Newsom's goal of testing 60,000 people a day and wearing a mask in public is obligatory

for the general population. On Wednesday, the death toll spiked to 98, bringing to 5,725 the total number of deaths so far. To read the full story, click [here](#).

New Job Killer Bill Would Devastate Small Employers in California

A bill requiring that all employers provide 12 weeks of protected family leave and includes a private right of action has been labeled a job killer by the California Chamber of Commerce. The bill, SB 1383 significantly expands the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), which currently only applies to larger employers, to any employer with only one employee and requires these small employers to provide each eligible employee with 12 weeks of protected leave from work. To read the full story, click [here](#).

CDC Is 'Highly Concerned' About Coronavirus In The Fall

A pandemic of the novel Coronavirus has now killed more than 486,000 people worldwide. Over 9.5 million people across the globe have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the new respiratory virus, according to data compiled by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. The actual numbers are believed to be much higher due to testing shortages, many unreported cases and suspicions that some governments are hiding the scope of their nations' outbreaks. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Federal Agency Tells Employees 'No Reference To Anything COVID Related'

A federal fisheries management agency has barred some of its employees from making formal references to the COVID-19 pandemic without preapproval from leadership, according to an internal agency document. The National Marine Fisheries Service, part of the Commerce Department, manages federal fish stocks in partnership with appointed regional councils. Fishing crews and seafood businesses have been asking the agency to relax regulations as the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated their operations. There have also been outbreaks among industry workers. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Newsom's Confusing COVID-19 Decrees

California's Governor, Gavin Newsom, has been issuing confusing orders on COVID-19 recently, undermining trust. Managing something as new and unpredictable as the COVID-19 pandemic is, by its nature, a difficult task. That said, Californians are rightfully confused by the rapid, even erratic, changes of course that Gov. Gavin Newsom has steered in recent weeks after drawing praise for his early and straightforward actions in the first days of the public health crisis. To read the full story, click [here](#).

World Hits Coronavirus Milestones Amid Fears Worse To Come

The world surpassed two sobering coronavirus milestones Sunday -- 500,000 confirmed deaths, 10 million confirmed cases -- and hit another high mark for daily new infections as governments that attempted reopenings continued to backtrack and warn that worse news could be yet to come. "COVID-19 has taken a very swift and very dangerous turn in Texas over just the past few weeks," said Gov. Greg Abbott, who allowed businesses to start reopening in early May but on Friday shut down bars and limited restaurant dining amid a spike in cases. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Summer May Decide Fate Of Leading Shots In Vaccine Race

People on six continents already are getting jabs in the arm as the race for a COVID-19 vaccine enters a defining summer, with even bigger studies poised to prove if any shot really works -- and maybe offer a reality check. Already British and Chinese researchers are chasing the Coronavirus beyond their borders, testing potential vaccines in Brazil and the United Arab Emirates because there are too few new infections at home to get clear answers. The U.S. is set to open the largest trials -- 30,000 people to test a government-created shot starting in July, followed about a month later with another 30,000 expected to test a British one. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Some COVID-19 Patients Aren't Getting Better. Major Medical Centers Are Trying To Figure Out How To Help.

Major medical centers nationwide trying to understand why some COVID-19 patients continue to have symptoms weeks and even months after having been diagnosed with the Coronavirus. Amy Watson, 47, is one of those patients. She's had a fever, she said, for more than 100 days. To read the full story, click [here](#).

As California Opens Up, Companies Want Workers Back. Some Are Afraid To Return

Companies are reopening in California, and employees are returning to work. But with the global pandemic still raging and cases of coronavirus infection rising disturbingly in San Francisco and other parts of the State, many are worried about exposure on the job. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Some COVID-19 Patients Aren't Getting Better. Major Medical Centers Are Trying To Figure Out How To Help.

Major medical centers nationwide trying to understand why some COVID-19 patients continue to have symptoms weeks and even months after having been diagnosed with the Coronavirus. "What we need is more research to explain where the symptoms are coming from," one expert said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Small Business: A Canary In The U.S. Economic Coal Mine

If you are looking to predict the shape of the U.S. economic recovery — be it V, W, L or even K — don't look at the markets. Look instead at the small- and medium-sized businesses that represent 50 per cent of employment in the country. They are the best economic indicator in America right now. They are also in trouble. More than 70 per cent of them have been helped by emergency benefits since the start of the pandemic. But those benefits end this month — even as the typical small business only has enough cash reserves to cover two weeks of costs in lieu of any revenues. At the same time, the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP, will return to its pre-Covid-19 levels by the end of July. That means that unemployment benefits will shrink to around 40 per cent of what they are now, with a major impact on consumer spending. To read the full story, click [here](#).

L.A. County Braces For Painful Budget Cuts Due To Pandemic Shortfall

The L.A. County CEO will present a COVID-era spending plan to the Board of Supervisors today that carves out hundreds of millions of dollars from county departments and programs and leaves a big question mark about the future of funding for homeless services, among other things. To read the full story, click [here](#).

L.A. County Hospital Beds Could Fill In Coming Weeks As Covid-19 Cases Surge

Los Angeles county health officials warned Monday that local hospitals could reach capacity in the next two weeks as the Coronavirus infects more Angelenos through newly reopened businesses and public and private spaces. The news comes just a day after Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered bars closed in Los Angeles and six other California counties because of the virus's rapid spread. To read the full story, click [here](#).

CDC Doctor Warns 'This Is The Beginning' Of Coronavirus

In an age when we're used to seeing authorities using measured tones to describe the current coronavirus pandemic, some are becoming more vocal about what needs to be done to contain the virus. One of them is Dr. Anne Schuchat, the principal deputy director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), who is very worried about the current outbreaks happening across the United States. To read the full story, click [here](#).

States Reverse Openings, Require Masks Amid Resurgence; E.U. To Publish Border List, US Likely To Miss Out

Arizona's Republican Governor shut down bars, movie theaters, gyms and water parks Monday and leaders in several states ordered residents to wear masks in public in a dramatic course reversal amid an alarming resurgence of coronavirus cases nationwide. Among those implementing the face-covering orders is the city of Jacksonville, Florida, where mask-averse President Donald Trump plans to accept the Republican nomination in August. Trump has refused to wear a mask during visits to states and businesses that require them. To read the full story, click [here](#).

How Risky Is Flying During The Coronavirus Pandemic?

Flying can increase your risk of exposure to infection, but airlines are taking some precautions and you can too. Air travel means spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which puts you into close contact with other people. As travel slowly recovers, planes are becoming more crowded, which means you will likely sit close to other people, often for hours, which raises your risk. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Consumer Alert: Beware Of Contact Tracing Phishing Scams

As contact tracing becomes more common to track down those who may be exposed to COVID-19, scammers are using that to their advantage. The Better Business Bureau has a warning about contact tracing text message scams. The Hawaii Department of Health says contact tracers will most likely reach you through phone call or email. However, if you receive a text message saying you've been exposed to the Coronavirus, with a link, it could be a scam. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Ford Rolls Out 1-Year Return Policy For Car Buyers Amid Covid-19 Uncertainty

Buying a new car likely isn't a priority as economic uncertainty begins to bake in amid the coronavirus era, but Ford's latest program hopes to lay some of those fears to rest. Titled the Ford Promise, the U.S. automaker said on Monday it will allow new car buyers and lessees who finance through Ford Credit to return a vehicle with no strings attached in the event they lose their job. No, buyers won't be guaranteed a full refund, but they will have a burden of debt taken off their backs, should a worst-case-scenario play out. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Startling Images Reveal Coronavirus Forming Tentacles In Cells. It May Help Identify New Treatments

Startling, never-before-seen images show that the new Coronavirus hijacks proteins in our cells to create monstrous tentacles that branch out and may transmit the infection to neighboring cells. The finding, accompanied by evidence of potentially more effective drugs against COVID-19, published Saturday in the journal Cell by an international team of scientists. To read the full story, click [here](#).

This Is What Top U.S. Health Officials Say We Should Do Differently For The Next Pandemic

If another pandemic were to emerge in the U.S., the nation would need a better coordinated response and greater funding for public health on the local and federal level to respond accordingly, top U.S. health officials told lawmakers on Tuesday. Dr. Anthony Fauci told lawmakers that officials would need to do a better job of responding to the outbreak "in a coordinated way" rather than facing challenges with disparate responses during future pandemics. Dr. Robert Redfield said the U.S. has underinvested in the "core capabilities of public health" for decades and must be over-prepared, not underprepared.

To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Illustrates U.S. Divide On Face-Mask Mandates

Since early March, when the coronavirus pandemic's impact was first felt in the US, Julie Tang has been pushing a movement to persuade people to wear masks for their safety and to counter anti-Asian racism. The efforts of the retired Superior Court judge in San Francisco were backed by California Governor Gavin Newsom's recent order requiring the State's 40 million residents to wear face coverings in most public settings, particularly indoors. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Note: While EKA monitors governmental announcements, guidelines and recommendations, our updates are prepared for informational purposes and are compiled from publicly available sources. Our updates should not be considered health, medical, legal, or tax advice. Always consult a qualified professional regarding any specific questions you may have. All hyperlinks are live and will bring you to the information mentioned. If you are not interested in receiving future emails from us, then please reply with a "Remove" in the subject line and mention the email addresses to be removed.