

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA – October 14, 2020

Nine Months of Coronavirus

The [Safer at Home](#) order has been in place in Los Angeles since March 19. US coronavirus cases surpassed 7.5 million, with most states seeing a rise in cases. Nine months into the pandemic, more than 210,000 Americans have died. California has 852,406 confirmed cases to date. You can use the US News & World Report [Healthiest Communities coronavirus hub](#) to find up-to-date data on cases and deaths in the County you work or live.

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 EKA team members.

OPENING & CLOSING

State Health Officials Allows Social Gatherings

California health officials released [rules allowing social gatherings](#) for the first time since the pandemic began, enabling up to three households to get together outdoors. The new rules follow general guidance that has emerged over the last several months. Participants must stay six feet apart and wear masks except while eating or drinking. Besides requiring gatherings outside, the California Department of Public Health encourages residents to stick to the same three households as much as possible, essentially forming a social bubble. Such occasions can occur at private homes or in parks. The State says hosts should make sure to log the names of all attendees and their contact info in case of an infection. It says anyone with symptoms should not attend and that anyone who contracts Covid-19 within 48 hours should notify other attendees as soon as possible. People attending gatherings can go inside to use the bathroom as long as it is regularly sanitized. Such events should last no longer than two hours to limit exposure. And singing, chanting and shouting are "strongly discouraged," though if they occur, participants should wear masks and try to keep the volume down. The State until now has prohibited gatherings of households, though many have gotten together for months.

State's New Equity Metric

The County reported on what the State's additional equity metric on their [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#) means for LA County. Because most counties, including LA County, have significant differences in COVID-19 outcomes by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, the County notes that it is important to not only look at COVID-19 indicators across the entire County, but also to understand the experiences among different racial and ethnic groups and people who live in areas with unequal access to resources. For this reason, the State created a metric to assess each County's progress in closing gaps between people living in communities with the fewest resources and those living in communities with significant resources.

Recent Reopenings

[Public Health updated the Health Officer Order](#) to allow for outdoor dining at non-restaurant breweries and wineries serving a meal as long as the business follows all requirements for infection control and distancing that are detailed in Public Health protocols. Additional sectors recently allowed to reopen, upon implementing the required protocols for infection control and distancing, are noted below:

Nail salons may reopen for limited indoor services at 25 percent occupancy.

 Nail Salons With physical distancing & infection control protocols LA County Roadmap to Recovery	✓ Effective October 1, 2020, indoor services can resume at 25% occupancy. Salons encouraged to continue outdoor services.
	✓ Face coverings must be worn by customers and employees for the entire visit. ✓ Reservations are required and customers can only receive one service at a time.
	✓ Employees and customers screened for symptoms, and physical distancing measures are in place.
	✓ Magazines, coffee and other amenities are removed. Contactless payment systems encouraged. County of Los Angeles Public Health covid19.lacounty.gov/recovery

Cardrooms may reopen for outdoor gaming only. Food and beverages may not be served in cardrooms at this time. Indoor shopping malls will be allowed to reopen at 25 percent maximum occupancy; all food courts may offer take-out orders and all common areas remain closed per the State order.

 Indoor Shopping Malls With physical distancing & infection control protocols LA County Roadmap to Recovery	✓ Effective October 7, 2020, retail shops inside indoor malls with no outside access will be allowed to reopen at 25% capacity.
	✓ Food courts are open for curbside ordering and pick-up or delivery. Indoor dining and all common areas remain closed.
	✓ Customers and staff must wear face coverings, and measures are in place to ensure physical distancing.
	✓ Contactless payment systems are encouraged. Payment systems and frequently touched objects are sanitized regularly. County of Los Angeles Public Health covid19.lacounty.gov/recovery

Parents and children ages two years old and older must always wear a cloth face covering, avoid people not in their household, and sanitize hands before and after using playground equipment. There is no eating or drinking allowed at the playground. Indoor playgrounds remain closed.

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Outdoor Playgrounds</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">With physical distancing & infection control protocols</p> <p>LA County  Roadmap to Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outdoor playgrounds may reopen at the discretion of cities and the County Parks & Recreation Department.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All parents or caregivers and children age two years old and older must always wear a cloth face covering, avoid people not in their household, and sanitize hands before and after using playground equipment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No eating or drinking allowed at the playground, and parents or caregivers are encouraged to monitor their children to ensure physical distancing.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Indoor playgrounds remain closed. <p style="text-align: right;">   <small>covid19.lacounty.gov/recovery</small> </p>

Wineries and breweries for outdoor dining operations with modifications.

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Breweries & Wineries</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">With physical distancing & infection control protocols</p> <p>LA County  Roadmap to Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Breweries & wineries may operate outdoors and offer sit-down dining with a permitted caterer, restaurant, or food truck.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Alcohol must be purchased in the same transaction as a bona fide meal.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reservations are required, and physical distancing measures are in place.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Customers must wear cloth face coverings whenever not eating or drinking. <p style="text-align: right;">   <small>covid19.lacounty.gov/recovery</small> </p>

Comprehensive protocols for all sectors that are allowed to reopen are available on [the Public Health website](https://www.lacounty.gov/public-health). Public Health urges all operators of businesses that are currently closed to implement all the requirements in Public Health protocols prior to reopening to ensure compliance and avoid citations, fines and possible closure. It is critical that directives and infection protocols are followed to minimize COVID-19 spread as much as possible.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Presiding Judge Brazile Revises General Order on Face Masks

Presiding Judge Kevin C. Brazile issued a revised mandatory face mask order that prohibits the use of face masks with valves in all Los Angeles County courthouses. The new Order also requires that face masks be worn beneath face shields except as required by a physician. Children under the age of two are exempt from the Order. To read the press release, click [here](#).

Criminal Jury Trials

The presiding judge for the Los Angeles Superior Court issued a new general order prioritizing criminal jury trial while allowing certain civil cases to move forward in accordance with social distancing protocols. The court will give priority to criminal trials that were previously continued under a judicial emergency order issued in March by Judge Kevin C. Brazile for either misdemeanor or felony jury trials, according to a statement from the court, which added there are approximately 7,000 criminal cases that must be tried to satisfy a defendant's right to a speedy trial. To read the Order, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Guidance on Ventilation

LA County Health has released new Guidance for Ventilation at Workplace Settings. An important approach to lowering the concentrations of indoor air pollutants or contaminants including any viruses that may be in the air is to increase ventilation. This document provides information on how to improve ventilation through improving air circulation and air filtration. To view the guidance and other important information, click [here](#).

Flu Shot

According to LA County's Department of Public Health (Public Health), an important step to take this fall is to get a flu immunization. It is highly likely that both the flu and COVID-19 will be present at the same time. Now more than ever, it is important to be protected from the flu by getting immunized. Public Health will be offering [free flu vaccines to those 6 months of age and older at select locations across the County](#). Health insurance will not be a requirement.

COVID-19 Testing

Public Health advises that daily testing for the virus is not a substitute for infection control and distancing since it does not prevent someone from becoming infected and passing the virus along to others. Anyone who was in close contact with a person who is positive for COVID-19 from 48 hours before that person was diagnosed will need to quarantine away from all other people for 14 days. Just because you test negative for the virus after your exposure does not mean that you weren't infected, because the virus can take up to 14 days to incubate in your body. And again, as an exposed person, you can transmit the virus to others for at least 48 hours before your test comes back positive. You are only able to resume interactions with others after the complete 14-day incubation period has passed, you remained symptom free, and your test results were negative.

Protecting Yourself & Incubation Period

Because of the virus's long incubation period, even a person who has recently tested negative for the virus could be positive within hours of testing and be able to infect other people unknowingly. As a reminder, anyone who tests positive needs to isolate from others for at least 10 days, until symptoms have improved, and they are fever-free for at least 24 hours. Any person that tests positive for COVID-19 may be able to infect others for up to 10 days after being diagnosed, even if the person never had symptoms or their symptoms have subsided. And anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 may have been able to infect others for at least 48 hours before they tested positive or before they showed any symptoms. Protecting ourselves and other people requires every person be diligent, and it is this diligence that prevents transmission of the virus and saves lives. Find a community testing site near you (e.g., Rite Aid, UCLA Health, UrgentMED, Exer Urgent Care, Quest) with the [California for ALL Testing Tool](#). Click [here](#) to visit the COVID-19 testing website for more information and to sign up for a free test. Note: testing availability is subject to change and testing is by appointment only. Click [here](#) to learn more about COVID-19 testing in LA County.

Small Business Revitalization Grant Program

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has provided Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to create the Small Business Revitalization Grant Program. The Program, operated by the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), is designed to assist breweries with no kitchen, wineries with no kitchen, miniature golf parks, batting cage facilities, kart racing centers, and tanning salons in Los Angeles County that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Program is not designed to assist businesses operating in the City of Los Angeles. Eligible applicants will receive \$30,000 to use for working capital such as employee payroll, working capital to continue operations, payment of outstanding business expenses, and adaptive business practices needed to remain open. Applications for this Program will only be accepted for a one-week period, **starting** October 9, 2020, 12:00 p.m. through October 16, 2020, 12:00 p.m. Applications will be ranked via a lottery and applicants will be selected in the Order ranked per the lottery process. The lottery will be broadcast live at revitalizationgrant.lacda.org on Friday, October 20, 2020, at 9 a.m. It is imperative that applicants submit all documentation required, apply by the deadline, and respond to all LACDA communications in a timely manner.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Some Playgrounds Reopen

Some playgrounds and parks are being allowed to reopen in Los Angeles for the first time in months after being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they first must be cleaned and inspected.

Third-Party Food Delivery Apps

Los Angeles has extended for another 90 days its ban on third-party food delivery apps charging more than 15% of the total cost of an order to restaurants they serve.

SACRAMENTO

Cal/OSHA Training Academy

California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, known is presenting an online [Training Academy](#). Cal/OSHA is trying to ensure all employers and workers are protected from potential exposure to COVID-19 and have the information they need to need to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Cal/OSHA's Training Academy includes [training courses](#) and other [resources](#) related to COVID-19 to help employers and workers understand how to work safely during the pandemic. Employers are encouraged to use the training videos to reinforce their COVID-19 infection prevention plan. We will update the online training courses and other resources as needed and plan to add more material in multiple languages.

Alcoholic Beverage Control

The Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control announced the Sixth Notice of Regulatory Relief related to Virtual Wine and Beer Tastings and Charitable Promotions. ABC previously suspended enforcement of the many legal prohibitions on a temporary basis. Those temporary relief measures remain in place, and the Department now issues the following relief to enable winegrower, beer manufacturer, and certain other specified supplier licensees to partner with on-sale retailers to conduct "virtual meet the winemaker/brewer dinners" under the Business and Professions Code sections 25503.4 and 25503.45 and subject to certain parameters, and renews its former relief given to allow for Charitable Promotions and Sales related to this State of Emergency that was previously allowed to expire. To read the notice, click [here](#).

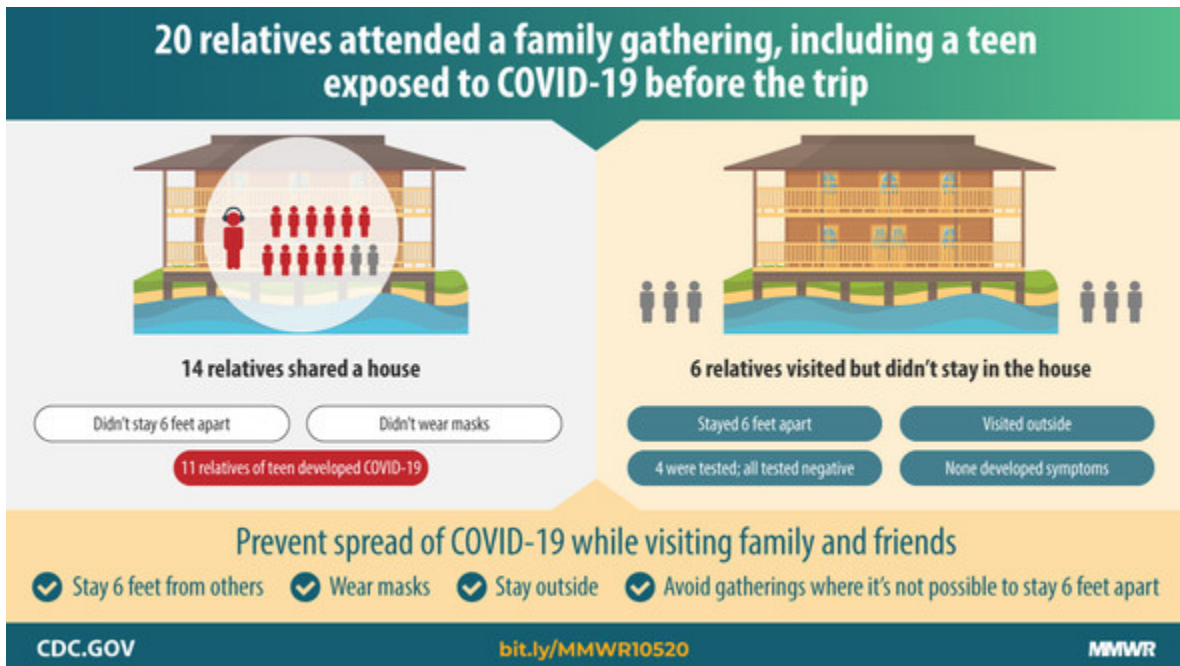
NATIONAL

Simpler PPP Forgiveness for Loans of \$50K or Less

The U.S. Small Business Administration, in consultation with the Treasury Department, released a simpler loan forgiveness application for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans of \$50,000 or less. This action streamlines the PPP forgiveness process to provide financial and administrative. Click [here](#) to learn more. They also released guidance clarifying that lenders must recognize the previously established extended deferral period for payments on the principal, interest, and fees on all Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, even if the executed promissory note indicates only a six-month deferral. The guidance means that lenders must immediately comply with the extended deferral period and notify borrowers of the change.

CDC Study

A new CDC study finds relatives from different households who stayed in the same house at a family gathering developed COVID-19. The outbreak was likely sparked by a 13-year-old exposed to someone with COVID-19 before the gathering. [Learn more about the study.](#)



- Everyone must continue to practice physical distancing of at least six feet apart and wear a clean cloth face covering that securely covers both your nose and mouth when around people outside of your household. [More information on cloth face coverings.](#)
- Wash/sanitize your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- If you are mildly sick, stay home for at least 10 days or until 24 hours after being fever free, whichever is longer. Call your doctor if you are concerned and/or your symptoms worsen.
- [More things you can do to prevent illness.](#)

Loan forgiveness underway for SBA's Paycheck Protection Program

The Small Business Administration is in the process of forgiving potentially millions of loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. The SBA began approving forgiveness applications and remitting forgiveness payments to PPP lenders for PPP borrowers October 2. There are a number [of criteria](#) that business owners must meet to have their loan forgiven, including maintaining staff levels or quickly rehiring workers that were let go. At least 60% of the loan amount must have been put toward payroll expenses, while the remainder could have been used for interest on mortgages, rent, and utilities. Even if loans, which required no personal guarantees or collateral, are not forgiven, they carry a very low 1% interest rate. The window to apply for a PPP loan opened in April and expired in August. According to the Small Business Administration, as of August, more than 5.2 million loans were approved through the relief program, equal to more than \$525 billion. The average loan size was \$100,729. Lawmakers have proposed legislation that would afford some small businesses the opportunity to apply for a second loan – but so far Republicans and Democrats in Congress have been unable to reach an agreement on a broader stimulus package. Help will not be coming soon. Last week,

President Trump instructed Republicans to pause discussions until after the presidential election.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Catholic priest sues Newsom

According to [Fox 11 news](#), a Catholic priest is suing Governor Gavin Newsom for allegedly "violating religious rights" by shutting down indoor church services across California amid the coronavirus pandemic. The lawsuit was filed last in California Superior Court against Newsom and 19 other state, County and municipal officials on behalf of Father Trevor Burfitt, who oversees mission churches in Kern, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Los Angeles Counties. Defendants named in the suit include Newsom, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, San Diego County Public Health Officer Dr. Wilma Wooten, San Diego County Sheriff Bill Gore and San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit. The suit also names officials in Los Angeles, Kern and San Bernardino counties, where Burfitt also oversees mission churches. Burfitt is the prior of Saint John Bosco Mission in San Diego, according to the complaint.

Tattoo Shops Sue State To Reopen

Three Los Angeles County tattoo shop owners, including one in Long Beach, filed a lawsuit against Gov. Gavin Newsom and two state health officials over the ongoing closure mandate imposed on the industry. Similar to other personal service businesses such as hair and nail salons, tattoo shops are highly regulated, particularly when it comes to safety. The [Safe Body Art Act](#) outlines all requirements to operate a tattoo and piercing business.

Court Dismisses COVID-19 Business Income Loss Suit

As detailed in [Law 360](#), District Judge André Birotte Jr dismissed a declaratory relief and bad faith action against Travelers Indemnity Company of Connecticut seeking coverage for COVID-19 business income losses. Plaintiff, a Los Angeles-based restaurant significantly impacted by COVID-19, held a policy with Travelers that it alleged provided coverage for COVID-19 losses. The policy contained three relevant provisions: (1) Civil Authority Coverage; (2) Business Income and Extra Expense Coverage; and (3) a Virus Exclusion. Under both the Civil Authority Coverage section and the Business Income and Extra Expense Coverage section, the insured was entitled to coverage if there were "direct physical loss of or damage to property..." Additionally, the Virus Exclusion provided that Travelers would not pay for "loss or damage caused by or resulting from any virus, bacterium or other microorganism that induces or is capable of inducing physical distress, illness or disease." The court first held that plaintiff failed to show that there was coverage under either the Civil Authority or Business Income and Extra Expense provisions.

California's Newest Employment Laws

Below is an overview of the most significant employment-related bills approved or vetoed by the Governor.

- [AB 1867](#) creates new Labor Code section 248.1, which, no later than September 19, 2020, requires COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave for workers employed by private businesses of 500 or more employees nationally (and certain health care providers and emergency responders). This bill essentially [covers all workers](#) in California who may not be entitled to supplemental paid sick leave covered by the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act established by the federal [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#). The bill also codifies [Executive Order N-51-20](#), providing supplemental paid sick leave for food sector workers, in new Labor Code section 248. Both new sections require hiring entities to provide a number of hours of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave to workers who are unable to work due to specified reasons relating to COVID-19, but only Section 248.1 requires the sick pay balance be stated on those employees' wage statements. The bill also requires employers to post a notice (available [here](#) and [here](#)) in the workplace (or distribute it via mail, e-mail, etc.). These provisions expire on December 31, 2020, or upon the expiration of the FFCRA, whichever is later.
- [AB 1867](#) also requires the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) to create a small employer family leave mediation pilot program, authorizing small employers and their employees to request mediation through the DFEH's dispute resolution division within a specified timeframe. Under the program, employers or employees may require DFEH mediation if: (1) the DFEH issues a right-to-sue notice based on a DFEH complaint that is related to family leave and (2) the named employer has between 5-19 employees. It prohibits employees from pursuing civil actions until the mediation is complete, and tolls the statute of limitations, including for additional related claims, from receipt of a request to participate in the program until the mediation is complete. These provisions will be repealed on January 1, 2024.
- For employers of five or more, [SB 1159](#) creates a rebuttable presumption that an employee contracted COVID-19 in the workplace if certain circumstances are met for purposes of workers' compensation. It also requires reporting to workers' compensation claims administrators and has stiff fines for non-compliance. Effective immediately upon the Governor's September 17, 2020, [signing](#).
- [AB 2043](#) requires Cal-OSHA to disseminate information on best practices for COVID-19 infection prevention in English and Spanish, together with other awareness and prevention measures, targeted at and to be easily understood by agricultural employees from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These provisions expire when the Governor or Legislature terminate the State of emergency. It went into effect immediately upon the Governor's signing, on September 28, 2020.
- [AB 1512](#) provides some relief—through January 1, 2027—from rest period laws for the security industry, possibly paving the way for later legislation benefitting other industries. AB 1512 authorizes registered private patrol operator employers to require certain security officer employees (those registered under the [Private Security Services Act](#)) to remain on the premises during rest periods, to remain on call, and to carry and monitor a communication device. The security officer must be permitted to restart a rest period anew as soon as practicable if the rest period is interrupted. This later, uninterrupted rest period would qualify as a compliant rest period. If a security officer cannot take an uninterrupted rest period of at least 10 minutes for every four hours

worked (or major fraction thereof), the officer must be paid one additional hour of pay at the base hourly rate. AB 1512 went into effect immediately upon the Governor's approval on September 30, 2020, but does not apply to cases filed before January 1, 2021.

- [AB 2479](#) extends, past January 1, 2021 and until January 1, 2026, the exemption in Labor Code section 226.75 that applies to rest periods for specified employees who hold safety-sensitive positions at petroleum facilities, to the extent they must carry and monitor communication devices and respond to emergencies, or remain on the employer's premises to monitor the
- [SB 973](#) requires private employers with 100 or more employees that must file the federal annual Employer Information Report (EEO-1) to also submit—on or before March 31, 2021, and each year after—a pay data report to the DFEH that states the number of employees by race, ethnicity, and sex in the following categories: all levels of officials and managers, professionals, technicians, sales workers, administrative support workers, craft workers, operatives, laborers and helpers, and service workers. [SB 973](#) requires the DFEH to make the reports available to the Department of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) upon request, to maintain the pay data reports for at least 10 years, and it authorizes the DFEH to seek an order requiring non-reporting employers to comply.
- [AB 685](#) requires employers, within one business day of receiving notice of potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, to: (1) provide written notice to all employees, the employers of subcontracted employees, and exclusive representatives who were on the premises at the same worksite, (2) provide all employees who may have been exposed and their exclusive representative with information regarding COVID-19-related benefits, including, but not limited to, workers' compensation, COVID-19-related leave, company sick leave, state-mandated leave, or supplemental sick leave, and (3) notify all employees, the employers of subcontracted employees, and the exclusive representative on the disinfection and safety plan the employer intends to implement.
- [AB 1963](#) amends [Section 11165.7](#) of the Penal Code to expand the list of mandated reporters to include human resource employees of a business of five or more employees that employs minors, as well as adults whose duties require direct contact with and supervision of minors in the performance of the minors' duties in the workplace. [AB 1963](#) requires those employers to provide mandated reporters with training on identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

WHAT WE'RE READING

Health Official: LA County Will Emerge From State Restrictions, But It'll Take Work

Los Angeles County's public health director says she's confident Wednesday that the County will eventually emerge from the most restrictive tier of the State's coronavirus economic-reopening roadmap, but it will take continued commitment from residents and businesses to lower the number of new cases. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Nine months into the coronavirus pandemic: no panic buying and local businesses need our support

Communities around the world have shown their resilience as they cycle in and out of lockdown. The panic buying in the early days is a thing of the past, but local businesses are still struggling to survive To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Colleges Tried To Prepare For COVID-19 Outbreaks. It Didn't Work

As colleges around the country wrestled with how to reopen amid the coronavirus crisis this fall, officials in California took a cautious approach with online classes, on-campus isolation rooms and restrictions on the number of students in dorms and on campus. But what deans and provosts couldn't control were the thousands of students who returned to fill apartments and houses in neighborhoods surrounding their schools, determined to salvage some semblance of a college experience. Unchecked by campus rules, these students have helped fuel COVID-19 outbreaks at several California campuses To read the full story, click [here](#).

Joint Chiefs Of Staff Quarantine After COVID-19 Penetrates Military Leadership

Most of the nation's top military leaders are quarantining after coming in contact with a senior officer with COVID-19, according to the Pentagon. The military's top two officers, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Air Force Gen. John Hyten, along with service chiefs from the Army, Navy and Air Force, are in quarantine after meeting with the officer last week. To read the full story, click [here](#).

President Trump And His Staff Defied CDC Coronavirus Guidelines 24 Times Since September 1

President Donald Trump and members of his administration have often flouted guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19, according to a review of news events by USA TODAY. Since September 1, the President and key Oval Office figures have violated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on the coronavirus at least 24 times, ignoring recommendations on mask wearing, social distancing, quarantining and more. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Drowning Our Sorrows? American Adults Are Drinking More Alcohol Amid COVID-19, Study Finds

A new study shows that American adults, particularly women, are drinking more amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Alcohol consumption has increased by 14% compared with a year ago, including 17% for women, according to a report published in the JAMA Network Open. The study also showed a 41% increase in heavy drinking for women. Heavy drinking is defined as four or more drinks for women within a couple of hours and five or more for men. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Ethicists Say Trump Special Treatment Raises Fairness Issues

The special treatment President Donald Trump received to access an experimental COVID-19 drug raises fairness issues that start with the flawed health care system many Americans

endure and end with the public's right to know more about his condition, ethics and medical experts say. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Coronavirus: Health experts join global anti-lockdown movement

Nearly 6,000 experts, including dozens from the UK, say the approach is having a devastating impact on physical and mental health as well as society. They are calling for protection to be focused on the vulnerable, while healthy people get on with their lives. The declaration has prompted warnings by others in the scientific community.

Coronavirus: Health Experts Join Global Anti-Lockdown Movement

Thousands of scientists and health experts have joined a global movement warning of "grave concerns" about Covid-19 lockdown policies. Nearly 6,000 experts, including dozens from the UK, say the approach is having a devastating impact on physical and mental health as well as society. They are calling for protection to be focused on the vulnerable, while healthy people get on with their lives. The declaration has prompted warnings by others in the scientific community. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Early SoCal COVID-19 Cases Linked to New York, According to Study

Most COVID-19 patients in Southern California during the early months of the pandemic appear to have been infected by a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus introduced to the region from New York state via Europe, not directly from China, where the virus was first detected, according to a study released Wednesday by Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Did COVID-19 Disrupt California's Voter Registration Surge?

Voter registration has surged in California. The [California Secretary of State](#) reports 85% of eligible Californians are on the voter rolls, an unprecedented 11% increase from the same point in 2016. The drama of national politics in recent years has stoked interest in the election, leading more Californians to register. At the same time, the California New Motor Voter (CNMV) Act, implemented in 2018, may play a role because DMV customers must engage with voter registration to complete certain transactions. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's Unemployment Backlog Shrinks To 1.3 Million

California's embattled unemployment benefits agency said Wednesday it has cleared about 246,000 of its more than 1.6 million backlogged claims following a two-week "reset" where it stopped taking new applications so it could improve its technology. But the agency said it would be January before it clears the backlog, frustrating state lawmakers who questioned the agency's director during a legislative hearing on Wednesday. Sharon Hilliard, executive director of the Employment Development Department, said some people have been waiting as long as five months to get benefits. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Changes at California's unemployment agency don't do enough to address problems, lawmakers say

During a legislative hearing in Sacramento on Wednesday, Assemblyman David Chiu (D-San Francisco) reminded EDD Director Sharon Hilliard that agency officials said last month that the

new system would allow 91% of claims to be automatically verified. He noted that he is concerned that only 64% of those who signed on had achieved verification by Tuesday. "That's a very big difference," Chiu said. "I'm not persuaded that this is actually moving things faster." The agency said some people seeking help from the [ID.me](#) call center may have also given up because of "longer-than-average hold times Monday that reached at one point over an hour." Others who did not follow through on applications may have been trying to file fraudulent claims, the agency said. Applicants have up to a week to complete the process. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Staff member in California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office tests positive for coronavirus

An intern in Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration and another state employee who interacted with members of the governor's staff have both tested positive for the coronavirus, though neither came in contact with Newsom or his top advisors, the governor and his spokesman said Wednesday. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Gavin Newsom Says Theme Parks Won't Reopen Anytime Soon

Disneyland, and other large theme parks in California, won't be reopening any time soon. That's the message California Gov. Gavin Newsom sent when asked about it during a press conference on Wednesday. The question came in the context of Disney Chairman Bob Iger's recent departure from Newsom's COVID-19 economy recovery task force. ... The governor said his office is in no hurry to put out guidelines, but that his office has been working with the theme park industry throughout the process. "It's very complex. These are like small cities, small communities, small towns," he said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

School Reopenings, Hybrid Learning Look Different Across California

Hybrid models vary widely across the State, with some school systems offering to bring students back one day a week, others planning on doing so on alternating days and still other schools planning on five days a week under a shortened schedule. ... As schools attempt to move toward hybrid schedules, the thorniest issues are ones that schools did not have to contemplate in normal times. Mid-year recalibrations to school schedules could make it difficult for some students to remain with the same teacher or even in the same school, as some districts mull whether to dedicate separate virtual schools to educate students in remote learning. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Moderna Vows to Not Enforce Covid-19 Vaccine Patents During Pandemic

Moderna Inc. said it wouldn't enforce patents related to its experimental Covid-19 vaccine while the pandemic continues and is willing to license the patents to others after the pandemic. The Cambridge, Mass., company has at least seven US patents related to its vaccine, including one for the invention of a vaccine using a gene-based technology to protect against a family of coronaviruses. The family of viruses includes the one that causes Covid-19. To read the full story, click [here](#).

'It Is A Slaughter': Public Health Champion Asks CDC Director To Expose White House, Orchestrate His Own Firing

A former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and public health titan who led the eradication of smallpox asked the embattled, current CDC leader to expose the failed US response to the coronavirus, calling on him to orchestrate his own firing to protest White House interference. To read the full story, click [here](#).

IRS reaching out to millions who have not claimed \$1,200 stimulus check

If you don't typically file tax returns and never received a stimulus check, you now have until November 21 to file your information with the IRS in order to get your payment. The deadline extension comes as the tax agency is reaching out to millions of Americans who could still be eligible for the money. The \$1,200 stimulus checks were authorized by Congress earlier this year. Lawmakers are still negotiating on a new stimulus package that could include a second round of similar payments. To read the full story, click [here](#).

How The Pandemic Is Making Information About Wildfires More Accessible Than Ever Before

Is the Angeles National Forest tweeting #BobcatFire updates at you? Have you stumbled across a YouTube tutorial on fire behavior or attended a community evacuation briefing on Zoom? You're the beneficiary of a pandemic-caused pivot of fire agencies to put more communications online. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Starts Forgiving Pandemic Loans Amid Criticism, Uncertainty

As the US government this month begins allowing small businesses to not repay their loans from a \$525 billion pandemic relief plan, shifting the cost to American taxpayers, the process and the agency overseeing it have come under blunt criticism by the Congressional watchdog agency. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Pelosi: No Airline Aid Without Larger Stimulus

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she would not support a stand-alone aid measure for the crippled airline industry unless the White House agreed to move forward with a larger coronavirus stimulus package. The pandemic has continued to hammer the airline industry. United Airlines and American Airlines began furloughing and laying off more than 35,000 workers earlier this month when the clock ran out on layoff prohibitions tied to the earlier federal stimulus relief. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Small-Business Loans Will Be Forgiven, but Don't Ask How

When the federal government began the Paycheck Protection Program in April, one rule was clear to small-business owners bedeviled by its chaotic and messy start: If most of the loan money was used to pay employees, the debt would be forgiven. But as the program enters its loan forgiveness phase, those owners — and their lenders — are finding out that although the principle may have been simple, its execution is anything but. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Work Safety Agency's Response To COVID Complaints: Letters, Not Inspections

A CalMatters analysis shows that Cal/OSHA dispatches inspectors in just 5% of COVID complaint cases. Non-COVID complaints were more than twice as likely to result in on-site inspections — but that's still far below the pre-pandemic share. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's death rate drops to low point not seen in months

As of Sunday, the California Department of Public Health recorded a seven-day average of deaths of 63, a level not seen since mid-summer, near the end of June and into early July. The Mercury News reported that the seven-day death average hit 61 on Friday, which was last reported by state health officials on July 5. Compared with last week, the State's average death toll has decreased by 16.7%, according to CDPH data, indicating a downward trajectory as autumn begins. Deaths have been consistently tapering off since the last day of July, which set a record for daily reported deaths with 219 in one day. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Federal Stimulus Checks Must Go To Prison Inmates, US Judge In California Rules

For months, incarcerated people across the country have received conflicting and confusing information about whether they can legally collect federal coronavirus stimulus funds, while the Internal Revenue Service flip-flopped on the question. A federal judge recently made clear that those behind bars do qualify for the \$1,200 checks, approved by Congress earlier this year as part of the largest economic aid package in US history. US District Judge Phyllis Hamilton ruled the decision to exclude them was arbitrary and capricious. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Virus That Causes COVID-19 Can Survive 28 Days on Common Surfaces, Research Says

The virus responsible for COVID-19 can survive for up to 28 days on surfaces such as glass, steel, vinyl, paper and polymer banknotes, Australian researchers said on Monday, reinforcing the importance of effective cleaning and handwashing to curb the spread of the disease. The findings from Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO, appeared to show that SARS-CoV-2 can survive on surfaces for significantly longer than many had anticipated. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Home Office Demand Takes Off As Pandemic Drags On

Sales of computer desks and chairs and home office installations have increased steadily in the past six months, manufacturers and installers report. To read the full story, click [here](#).

CDC Study Details 'Urgent Need' to Address Coronavirus Spread Among Young Adults

In a [study](#) released on Friday, the CDC examined 767 hotspot counties identified during June and July and found that increases in the percent of positive tests among people 24 and younger were followed by several weeks of increasing positivity rates in those aged 25 and older. The trend was particularly true in the South and West. To read the full story, click [here](#).

UN Warns Against Pursuing Herd Immunity to Stop Coronavirus

The head of the World Health Organization warned against the idea that herd immunity might be a realistic strategy to stop the pandemic, dismissing such proposals as "simply unethical." To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Coverage Safety Net Has Plenty of Holes in US

COVID-19 can do more than torment patients physically. It also clobbers some financially. Even though many insurers and the US government have offered to pick up or waive costs tied to the virus, holes remain for big bills to slip through and surprise patients. To read the full story, click [here](#).

The US Cities Most Susceptible to COVID-19, Poor Mental Health

Cities in the Rust Belt are particularly vulnerable to the twin challenges of COVID-19 and declining mental health, according to a new report. To read the full story, click [here](#).

UK Unveils 3-Level Lockdown Plan; Liverpool At Highest Risk

The British government carved England into three tiers of coronavirus risk on Monday in a bid to slow a resurgent outbreak, putting the northern city of Liverpool into the highest-risk category and shutting its pubs, gyms and betting shops. To read the full story, click [here](#).

More Companies Are Using Technology To Monitor For Coronavirus In The Workplace

As more and more businesses look to reopen, technology firms are offering an array of monitoring systems to try to keep the coronavirus out of office buildings, medical facilities and industrial plants. This sector could be a multi-billion-dollar business in the coming year, analysts say. To read the full story, click [here](#).

The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Claimed Far More Lives Than Reported, Study Says

Far more Americans have died as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic than have been counted and reported, according to new research published Monday in the Journal of the American Medical Association. "For every two Americans that we know of who are dying of Covid-19, another American is dying," said Dr. Steven Woolf, author of the new research and director emeritus of the Center on Society and Health at Virginia Commonwealth University. 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.