

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA December 16, 2020

Coronavirus Deaths Soar. The worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus currently is more than 67.7 million confirmed cases across more than 180 countries. More than 300,000 people in the US have died from the virus. The United States may have two coronavirus vaccines by the end of the week. The [Safer at Home](#) order has 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 EKA team members.

Use Your Phone to Help Save Lives

As of December 10, 2020, you can opt-in to receive notifications on your cell phone when you have come in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. California Notify does not gather your name, your contact information, your location, your movements or the identity of the people you meet. [Visit the CA Notify website to learn more.](#)

OPENING/ CLOSING & RESTRICTIONS

Revised Temporary Health Officer Order

The County provided a revised Health Officer Order, Temporary Targeted Safer at Home Health Officer Order for Control of COVID-19: Tier 1 Substantial Surge Response, December 9, 2020. The revised HOO is posted on the Public Health [website](#). The revisions align with the State's changes with respect to stand-alone grocery store capacity limits (increasing to 35%) and outdoor playgrounds (permitted for use with face coverings and physical distancing). The revisions also make clarifications regarding defining personal care services, botanical gardens (now permitted as an outdoor recreational activity), and capacity for certified farmer's markets (increasing to 35%). In addition, the revisions clarify that temporary outdoor seating at restaurants is closed to the public. Aligning with state guidelines, Los Angeles County Public Health will allow playgrounds in LA County to open so that all children can have safe access to the outdoors. Remember to follow these guidelines to keep everyone safe and healthy.



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

New Grant Opportunity

From local restaurants and retail storefronts to neighborhood salons and coffee shops, over the last year we have seen the pandemic take an economic and emotional toll on many small businesses. Eligible business owners can apply for grant support from [FOUND/L.A.](#). Those who meet the eligibility requirements will be entered into a pool of eligible applicants. On designated selection days, grant recipients will be randomly selected from this pool until all funds are expended. The size of the grant will be between \$5,000 and \$25,000 depending on the size of the business. The first round of applications will be accepted until Sunday, December 20. To learn more and apply, click [here](#).

Free COVID-19 Testing

With widespread community transmission, there is a daily risk of being infected with COVID-19. Please be sure to get tested if:

- You are having symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- If you think you were exposed because you were working, especially in essential services, in a place where you are frequently exposed to other people who may not be taking precautions.
- If you share living spaces with other people who may be positive for COVID-19.
- If you have been in a crowd or gathering where people were close together and not wearing face coverings and/or keeping their distance.

If you think you need a test, the County encourages you to call your doctor first. Testing is best done by a healthcare provider, so that they can monitor your care. If you do not have a doctor

or are unable to contact them, dial 2-1-1 for a referral to a provider. Other private COVID-19 testing may be available. Find a community testing site near you with the [California for ALL Testing Tool](#). Click [here](#) for more information and to sign up for a free test. Note: testing availability is subject to change and testing is by appointment only.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

LA City Motion/ Grocery Stores

Koretz introduced a resolution today that calls on grocery and drug retail stores to prioritize enforcement of the Mayor's emergency order to report COVID clusters, provide clear communication and education of rights to workers and customers, have a staff member posted outside each store to monitor masks and store capacity, public health council paid by the employer for active monitoring, paid child care by the employer, vaccine priority, and hazard pay.

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County Supervisors Vote To Ask Newsom For Local Control Over Coronavirus Crisis

Orange County supervisors voted unanimously last week to ask Gov. Gavin Newsom for local control over the coronavirus crisis, hoping to rid the County of the same rules and regulations facing 10 other counties in the Southern California region. During the Supervisors meeting, several residents spoke out against the State's order banning all indoor and outdoor dining, limiting retail stores to 20% capacity and closing down hair salons and barber shops [among other new restrictions](#). The order went into effect remains in place in the 11-county Southern California region for three weeks. "Please do what you can to open up this county — find a loophole, openly defy the governor, make it a \$1 fine to be open," one man said during the meeting. However, the resolution that supervisors approved Tuesday does not call for violating the State's health order. Rather, O.C. officials want Newsom to give the county permission to make its own rules.

SACRAMENTO

Governor Newsom Signs Executive Order on Actions in Response to COVID-19

Among other things, the order updates the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) emergency temporary standard in keeping with new guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) related to quarantine guidelines. Read the full order [here](#), and read CDPH's updated quarantine guidelines [here](#).

California Reopens Playgrounds During Regional Stay-Home Order

California quietly changed [its regional stay-home order](#) to allow playgrounds to reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The order originally made outdoor playgrounds off-limits as a way to curb surging coronavirus cases across the State. Other spaces shut down during the order included outdoor dining at restaurants. The State received significant criticism over the closure

of the park, including from government officials who wrote Gov. Gavin Newsom and the California Department of Public Health letters expressing concerns.

What Should California Employers Do in Response to California's Order?

An alert from the law firm [Wilson Sonsini](#) notes that although California's statewide Order might at first glance suggest "business as usual," for many covered employers this may not be the case. For example, in response to the Order being triggered in a region, some counties in that region will simply issue an order or directive saying that the Order is now applicable to all county residents and employers. Other counties in that same region may issue orders that are even more restrictive than the Order. The health officer for the City and County of San Francisco, for example, has issued a rather lengthy order in response to the Order, whereas other Bay Area counties have to date not done so. Therefore, every employer should consult, understand, and ensure that it is operating in full compliance with, the Order itself as well as any other existing and new public health orders issued by the County in which it is doing business. Moreover, even where a county elects not to issue a new order with requirements beyond those in the Order, employers should expect that in that county employers will continue to be subject to existing public health orders.

California Lawmakers Propose An Extension To Help Tenants

A state law protecting tenants from evictions in California expires in two months, but lawmakers are seeking an extension until the end of next year, citing continuing economic hardships from a new stay-at-home order that's meant to curb the spread of the coronavirus. The current law bars evictions as long as renters pay at least 25% of their rent and attest to financial hardship, but it expires on January 31, 2021. Legislation introduced Monday would extend the protections for 11 months, until December 31 of next year. [Legislation](#) was also introduced by state Sen. Anna Caballero that would extend protections for two months — to March 31, 2021 — but the measure is likely to be amended to expand protections.

NATIONAL

Will There Be Second Stimulus Check Before End of 2020?

According to USA Today, a bipartisan group of lawmakers unveiled a \$908 billion coronavirus rescue package Monday, with a potential deal coming down to the wire since Congress has until the end of the week to strike an agreement that can be tied to longer-term spending legislation. Economists have stressed the need for additional aid as 12 million Americans could lose their unemployment benefits the day after Christmas. The package is split into two bills. The larger, \$748 billion bill, called the [Bipartisan Emergency COVID Relief Act of 2020](#), includes enhanced unemployment benefits. It would also temporarily extend an eviction moratorium and federal student loan forbearance, according to a summary of the proposal. The bill, however, lacked specific details on key issues that have held up a months-long standoff in Washington, including Democrats' demands for state and local government aid, along with liability protections for businesses sought by Republicans. Congress can opt to vote for those issues in a separate, \$160 billion bill, or the Bipartisan State and Local Support and Small Business Protection Act of 2020,

which is expected to deliver state and local aid and provide liability insurance for businesses. To read what's in the proposed stimulus package, click [here](#).

Stimulus talks sputter

After a flurry of momentum over the last week, the stimulus talks are back to where they've been for months: nowhere. Congressional leaders have retreated to their corners, blaming each other for inaction as the economy stumbles and the US nears 300,000 dead from the virus. Time is running short in the lame duck, with as few as nine days for Congress to deliver much-needed relief. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is loath to divide Republicans as he confronts two years with, at best, a slim majority. And the bipartisan \$908 billion framework includes \$160 billion in aid to states and localities that is attracting pronounced GOP opposition — just as a liability shield is being shunned by Democrats.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

California Churches Take Fight For In-Person Worship To SCOTUS

After the US Supreme Court last week [directed a lower court to reconsider a California case](#) involving a local church with campuses in Corona, Los Angeles, Pasadena and Santa Ana, a battle against the State's ban on in-person worship amid the pandemic continues. Last week, Liberty Counsel [filed](#) a renewed application to the US Supreme Court on behalf of Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry asking for an injunction in their federal lawsuit against California's "unconstitutional worship ban and discriminatory treatment." The Harvest Rock application comes on the heels of the last month's US Supreme Court decision in New York-based Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo and Agudath Israel v. Cuomo. The justices' 5-4 decision ruled in favor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Agudath Israel of America, which argued that New York's health restrictions violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. After much legal wrangling in the two weeks since the SCOTUS decision, another district court hearing has been set for December 18 in the matter of Harvest Rock Church, Inc.; Harvest International Ministry v. Gavin Newsom.

Another Court Issues Preliminary Injunction Against Newsom's Blueprint

Kern County Superior Court Judge Gregory Pulskamp [granted](#) a preliminary injunction against Gov. Gavin Newsom and 19 state and county officials sued by Roman Catholic priest Trevero Burfitt, protecting him and his ministries from any further legal action or harassment. On September 29, Burfitt sued Newsom and 19 state, County and municipal officials in Kern, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Los Angeles counties alleging they violated eight provisions of the California Constitution. The Thomas More Society, representing Burfitt and his ministries, sought a temporary restraining order to prevent enforcement of state and county orders and stop the alleged harassment of congregants by county employees. Within a few weeks of Burfitt's lawsuit, Los Angeles County sent food and garbage inspection workers to his church to undergo surveillance, and the church was fined \$1,000 after the workers discovered two women wearing masks who were praying inside a sanctuary that holds 500 people. Less than three months of Burfitt's initial filing, the judge ruled in his favor. Pending a full trial on the merits, Newsom, state and county officials were enjoined from enforcing against Burfitt "the

provisions of the Blueprint for a Safer Economy, the Regional Stay at Home Order, and all Covid-19 restrictions that fail to treat houses of worship equal to the favored class of entities,” Pulskamp ruled. The judge ruled that Newsom’s Blueprint was not “narrowly tailored” because the occupancy limits imposed on places of worship by the Purple Tier of the Blueprint are zero, a complete ban of indoor religious services.

END-OF-YEAR EMPLOYER REMINDERS

COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave, Reporting Obligations in California

The [Cooley law firm](#) put together a very informative alert that summarizes recently enacted requirements applicable to California employers regarding sick pay and reporting positive COVID-19 cases.

Paid sick leave

AB 1867, which took effect on September 19, 2020, provides for paid sick leave, in addition to paid sick leave already required by California law, for employees of employers who were not otherwise covered by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). Specifically, AB 1867 provides that private employers with 500 or more employees in the United States must provide additional paid sick leave to their employees for specific COVID-19-related reasons. This bill further codified a previous executive order providing supplemental paid sick leave for COVID-19-related reasons for certain employees in the food sector, adding Labor Code Section 248 to the Labor Code. AB 1867 will remain in effect until the later of (i) December 31, 2020, or (ii) the expiration of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act established by the FFCRA. The Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act is also currently set to expire as of December 31, 2020.

Which employers are covered by Labor Code Section 248.1?

All private employers that employ 500 or more employees in the United States are covered by Labor Code 248.1 and must provide supplemental paid sick leave for certain COVID-19-related reasons to its employees.

Which employees are covered by Labor Code Section 248.1?

A “covered worker” is any person who is employed by a covered employer and is also required to *leave their home or other place of residence to perform work* for the covered employer. In other words, an employee who is not working from home and is employed by a covered employer is eligible for sick leave under this new law.

For what reason can an individual take supplemental paid sick leave?

A covered worker of a covered employer is entitled to supplemental paid leave if the covered worker is unable to work due to any of the following reasons:

1. The covered worker is subject to federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19

2. The covered worker is advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine or self-isolate due to concerns related to COVID-19
3. The covered worker is prohibited from working by the covered worker's covered employer due to health concerns related to the potential transmission of COVID-19

How much supplemental paid sick leave does a covered worker receive?

Covered workers considered full-time or who are scheduled to work, on average, at least 40 hours per week in the two weeks preceding the date that supplemental paid sick leave was taken by the covered employer, are entitled to 80 hours of supplemental paid sick leave. Special rules apply for the calculation of pay to part-time workers.

The total number of hours of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave to which a covered worker is entitled *is in addition to any paid sick leave that may be available under state or local law*. A covered employer cannot require a covered worker to use any other paid leave or unpaid leave, paid time off or vacation time provided by the covered employer before allowing them to use COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave or in lieu of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave.

Are employees compensated for supplemental paid sick leave in the same manner as regular paid sick leave?

No. Covered workers are compensated in a similar manner as under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act under the FFCRA. Thus, each hour of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave must be compensated at the highest of:

- The covered worker's regular rate of pay for their last pay period, including pursuant to any collective bargaining agreement that may apply;
- The state minimum wage; or
- The local minimum wage to which the covered worker is entitled.

Notwithstanding the above, a covered employer is not required to pay more than \$511 per day or \$5,110 in the aggregate to a covered worker for supplemental paid sick leave.

In addition, the law also provides some relief for covered employers that already provided covered workers with a supplemental sick leave benefit for reasons covered by Labor Code Section 248.1. Covered employers that provided additional paid time off in excess of regular paid sick leave and compensated covered workers at an amount equal to or greater than what Labor Code Section 248.1 requires (as described above), may count the hours of the other paid benefit or supplemental leave toward the total number of hours of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave for the covered worker. Alternatively, if the covered employer did not compensate a covered worker in an amount equal to or greater than the compensation required under Labor Code Section 248.1 during the prior supplemental leave, the covered employer can retroactively provide the supplemental pay to satisfy the compensation requirement and then count those hours toward the covered worker's supplemental paid sick

leave entitlement. Any sick leave provided to which the covered worker was already entitled to by law is excluded from this reprieve.

Do employers have to provide notice of this supplemental paid sick leave law?

Yes, pursuant to Labor Code Section 247, covered employers must display a poster explaining the nature of the supplemental paid sick leave law. If employees do not frequent a physical workplace, the notice may be disseminated to employees electronically.

In addition, as with regular paid sick leave, covered employers must also provide notice in the covered worker's wage statement showing the amount of available COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave each pay period. This must be a separate line item from regular paid sick leave on the wage statement.

Workers compensation reporting

In May 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Executive Order N-62-20, which created a disputable presumption that any COVID-19-related illness of an employee who worked outside of their homes arose out of and in the course of employment for the purposes of awarding workers compensation benefits, if certain requirements are met. SB 1159, which went into effect on September 17, 2020, codifies and supersedes that previous executive order and adds additional reporting requirements. SB 1159 will expire on January 1, 2023, or the date that it is repealed.

SB 1159 applies to employees who test positive during an "outbreak" at the employee's "specific place of employment" and whose employer has five or more employees. A "specific place of employment" refers to a "building, store, facility, or agricultural field where an employee performs work at the employee's direction." *This does not include the employee's home or residence, except for those who provide home healthcare services to another individual.*

Disputable presumption for COVID-19 cases

SB 1159 creates a disputable presumption that a COVID-19-related "injury" suffered by an employee arose out of and in the course of employment and is therefore covered by workers' compensation.

An "injury" is defined as an "illness or death resulting from COVID-19 if *all* of the following apply: (1) the employee tested positive or was diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days after a day that the employee performed labor or services *at the employee's place of employment at the employer's direction*; (2) the day in which the employee performed labor or services at the employee's place of employment was on or after July 6, 2020, and the date of injury shall be the last date the employee performed labor or services at the employee's place of employment at the employer's direction prior to the positive test; and (3) the employee's positive test occurred during a period of an "outbreak" at the employee's specific place of employment.

An outbreak exists if any of the following applies within a period of 14 calendar days: (1) if the employer has 100 employees or less at a specific place of employment, four employees test positive for COVID-19; (2) if the employer has more than 100 employees at a specific place of

employment, 4% of the number of employees who reported to the specific place of employment test positive for COVID-19; or (3) a specific place of employment is ordered to close by a local public health department, the State Department of Public Health, the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or a school superintendent due to a risk of infection with COVID-19.

An employer can rebut this presumption by providing evidence, such as measures the employer put in place to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19 and evidence of the employee's nonoccupational risks of COVID-19 infection.

Reporting requirements

Under SB 1159, if an employer "knows or reasonably should know that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19," then the employer must within three business days report to its claims administrator, via email or facsimile, the following information: (1) an employee has tested positive; (2) the date the employee tested positive (date the specimen was collected for testing); (3) specific address or addresses of the employee's specific place of employment during the 14-day period preceding the date of the employee's positive test; and (4) the highest number of employees who reported to work at the employee's specific place of employment in the 45-day period preceding the last day the employee worked at each specific place of employment.

COVID-19 Exposure Notification Requirements

AB 685, which goes into effect on January 1, 2021, imposes certain reporting and notification requirements to both employees and to the local public health department. This expires on January 1, 2023. AB 685 applies to both private and public employers, except it does not apply to employees who as part of their job duties conduct COVID-19 testing or screening, or provide direct patient care or treatment to individuals who are known to have tested positive for COVID-19, are under investigation, or in quarantine or isolated related to COVID-19, unless the "qualifying individual" is an employee at the same worksite.

Employee notification requirements

If an employer in California receives notice of a potential exposure of COVID-19, then, within *one business day*, the employer must provide all of the following:

- Provide written notice to all employees, and the employers of subcontracted employees, who were on the premises at the same worksite as the "qualifying individual" within the "infectious period" (the time period that a COVID-19 positive individual is infectious, as determined by the State Department of Public Health), that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. The notice must be provided in the same manner as they would normally communicate employment-related information. The notice must be sent in both English and the language understood by a majority of employees.
- Provide the exposed employees with information regarding COVID-19-related benefits that the employee may be entitled to under applicable federal, State or local laws (e.g.,

workers' compensation, sick leave, etc.) as well as anti-retaliation and anti-discrimination protections.

- Notify the employees about the disinfection and safety plan that the employer plans to implement and complete per CDC guidelines.

“Qualifying individual” refers to any person: (1) with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, as defined by the State Department of Public Health; (2) with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis from a licensed healthcare provider; (3) with a COVID-19-related order to isolate provided by a public health official; or (4) who has died due to COVID-19, based on the determination of a county public health department or per inclusion in the COVID-19 statistics of a county.

An employer is considered to have received notice of potential exposure if the employer receives notice through the following sources: (1) public health official or licensed medical provider that an employee was exposed to a qualifying individual at the worksite; (2) employee or the employee's emergency contact, that the employee is a “qualifying individual”; (3) the employer's testing protocol that the employee is a “qualifying individual”; or (4) subcontracted employer that the “qualifying individual” was on the worksite of the employer.

These notices must be maintained by the employer for at least three years.

Notification to local public health agency of COVID-19 outbreaks

If an employer is notified of a COVID-19 outbreak in its workforce, then within 48 hours the employer must notify the local public health agency in the jurisdiction of the worksite of the following: (1) names, number, occupation and worksite of employees who are a “qualifying individual”; (2) business address; and (3) NAICS code of the worksite where the qualifying individuals work. The employer must continue to notify the local health department of any subsequent COVID-19 cases in the workplace.

COVID-19 outbreak is defined by the California State Department of Public Health, which currently defines this as “[a]t least three probable or confirmed COVID-19 cases within a 14-day period in people who are epidemiologically-linked in the setting, are from different households, and are not defined as close contacts of each other in any other case investigation.”

This requirement does not apply to health facilities as defined under Section 1250 of the California Health and Safety Code.

Suspension of operations by Cal-OSHA and citations for serious violations

In addition to the notice requirements, AB 685 provides that if the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal-OSHA) determines that a “place of employment, operation, or process, or any part thereof” exposes workers to COVID-19 such that it would constitute an imminent hazard to employees, then Cal-OSHA may prohibit the performance of the operation or process.

Such prohibition would apply only to the immediate area in which the imminent hazard exists and *notto* any portions of the operation that does not pose a risk to employees. If Cal-OSHA

prohibits such operations, it shall issue a notice to the employer, which must be placed in a conspicuous place at the worksite. The notice cannot be removed except by a representative of Cal-OSHA, or until the place of employment, operation, or process is made safe or the required safeguards or safety appliances or devices are provided. Entry is allowed for the purposes of eliminating the dangerous conditions and with the knowledge and permission of Cal-OSHA.

AB 685 also changes the procedures whereby Cal-OSHA issues “serious violations.” Specifically, under current law, before Cal-OSHA can issue a citation to an employer for a serious violation, the agency must first provide the employer a “notice of intent to issue a serious violation” setting forth the violations and conditions warranting the citation as well as requesting certain information. The employer can respond to the notice within 15 days. AB 685 eliminates this initial notice of intent prior to issuing a citation related to COVID-19.

Disclosure of medical information and anti-retaliation

AB 685 also makes it clear that nothing in the bill would require employees to disclose medical information unless required by law.

Additionally, under AB 685, employers are prohibited from retaliating against an employee for disclosing his or her positive COVID-19 test or diagnosis or order to quarantine or isolate. Employees who believe they have been retaliated against may file a complaint with the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement.

WHAT WE’RE READING

Some 4 Million Californians Sign Up For Smartphone COVID-19 Alerts In First Few Days

An estimated 4 million Californians have signed up for the State’s smartphone-based COVID-19 notification system as of Friday afternoon, according to the California Department of Public Health. The system, dubbed CA Notify, officially launched Thursday and builds off of traditional contact tracing methods by sending smartphone alerts to people who’ve spent prolonged time with someone who later tests positive for the novel coronavirus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

These California Lawmakers Distanced For Work. Then They Shared Dinner At A Sacramento Restaurant

For their swearing-in session on Monday, Assembly leaders moved their house from the State Capitol to the Golden 1 Center to make sure lawmakers were appropriately spaced. COVID-19 safety concerns meant that families and guests were excluded from the event. Just hours later, however, five California state Assembly members dined together outside at a Sacramento restaurant. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Ralphs Will Provide COVID-19 Vaccine at Its Southland Pharmacies

The owners of the Ralphs supermarket chain said Wednesday that their stores would provide access to the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available in California. Ralphs has 77 pharmacies in the Southern California area. The timing of when the vaccine would be

available at those pharmacies was not immediately clear. On Tuesday, Los Angeles County health officials said the initial allocation of roughly 84,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses would be available as early as next week, with initial priority given to health care workers. To read the full story, click [here](#).

A User's Guide To CA Notify, The State's COVID-19 Alert System For Smartphones

Californians are now able to conscript their cellphones in the fight against COVID-19. On Thursday, the State officially launched CA Notify, a system that sends smartphone alerts to people who've spent time with someone who later tested positive for the novel coronavirus. This free technology is coming online as regions across the state grapple with climbing COVID-19 case totals and higher-than-ever hospitalization numbers. State officials are hopeful the digital tool will help slow the spread of the coronavirus by giving people the information they need to quickly isolate and test after coming in contact with the fast-spreading disease. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Unemployment: Bank Of America Reveals It Paid Millions To 'Double-Dipping' EDD Fraudsters

We've reported how EDD has paid scammers at least a billion dollars in phony unemployment claims. Now, a stunning development. Bank of America has revealed it paid EDD fraudsters hundreds of millions of dollars too. The scammers had made false claims of fraudulent use of their EDD debit cards...it was fraudsters claiming fraud. Now Bank of America is trying to claw back that money from criminals - but it's also taking money from honest workers with legitimate claims. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Long Beach Approves \$5 Million 'Resiliency Fund' Proposal For Restaurants, Bars

When another federal stimulus package comes out, Long Beach will spend at least \$5 million of it to help restaurants, breweries and bars that have been impacted by coronavirus-related closures. The City Council approved the idea for the "resiliency fund" for the industry during its Tuesday, December 8, meeting. The item came nearly two weeks after Long Beach aligned with Los Angeles County in banning in-person dining at restaurants to stem the further spread of the coronavirus, and two days after Southern California came under a stay-at-home order that extended that ban across the region for at least three weeks. Although another stimulus package is not guaranteed, Mayor Robert Garcia said during the meeting that he is "very confident" that the incoming Biden administration will prioritize it. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Ventura Restaurant Nick The Greek Defies Order To Close

A confrontation between a business owner and employees with the Ventura County Health Care Agency has gone viral on social media. "What am I going to do if I close? Are you going to pay my rent," Nick the Green owner Anton Van Happen can be heard saying in the video. "OK, if you're not going to pay my rent, I'm not closing." To read the full story, click [here](#).

Long Beach extends Open Streets program

Long Beach's Open Streets program, which allows businesses to expand into sidewalk parklets and for some streets throughout the city to close to vehicle traffic, may be here to stay. The City Council voted unanimously at its Tuesday, Dec. 15, meeting to extend the program, which was set to expire at the end of the year. City staff will now assess the program on a quarterly basis while Long Beach remains under a health order to stem the further spread of the coronavirus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Teachers Push To Be Near Front Of COVID Vaccine Line

California teachers facing pressure to support school reopenings have a request for state health officials: Put educators near the front of the line for coronavirus vaccinations. Teachers unions, led by the powerful California Teachers Association, say it's one of the most important steps needed before the state can safely and fully return to in-person instruction for students who have been out of the classroom for nearly a year. Educators and labor leaders have used their clout with Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration to push for teachers to be vaccinated soon, right after health care workers. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Hospitals Scramble To Prioritize Covid Vaccine For Their Workers. Who Gets Them First?

If there's such a thing as a date with destiny, it's marked on Dr. Taison Bell's calendar. At noon Tuesday, Bell, a critical care physician, is scheduled to be one of the [first health care workers](#) at the University of Virginia Health System to roll up his sleeve for a vaccination to ward off the coronavirus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

At least three Bay Area counties raise grocery store capacity limits to 35%

In efforts to stem panic buying and hoarding, at least three of the five Bay Area counties mandating stay-at-home orders will increase the number of customers allowed inside grocery stores, matching the State's latest update. Alameda, Contra Costa and Marin counties will allow up to 35% capacity in grocery stores, up from the 20% initially announced [last week](#). The change came after pushback from the California Grocers Association, which said lower customer limits would likely cause long lines, frenzied buying and stockpiling. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Gov. Newsom's companies got \$3 million in relief loans

Companies affiliated with California Gov. Gavin Newsom received nearly \$3 million in federal loans created to help small businesses survive the pandemic, more than eight times the amount originally reported, according to newly released information from the US government. Nine businesses tied to Newsom's PlumpJack Group split the nearly \$2.9 million in loans through the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, according to new figures released last week. The governor put his business holdings into a blind trust before he took office last year and so would not have participated in the decision to obtain the loans. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Entire Bay Area Region Very Close To Triggering Stay-At-Home Order

San Mateo, Napa, Solano and Santa Cruz counties may have to adopt the state's new stay-at-home order very, very soon. Under the new stay-at-home framework, a region must shut down

once it dips below 15% intensive care unit capacity. The Bay Area region is composed of 11 counties, and according to data released by the state Monday, is down to just 17.8% ICU capacity. That figure is actually up from the 16.7% number that was reported Sunday, but remains dangerously close to the 15% threshold. The new order could be triggered as early as Tuesday when the state files another update. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Need To Cancel Your Holiday Travel Plans Amid COVID? Here's The Latest On Changes And Refunds

With California's pandemic policies tightening, COVID-19 cases escalating and vaccines unlikely to reach most people until spring or later, many families are rethinking their holiday travel plans. "It's time to cancel everything," LA Mayor Eric Garcetti said in a news conference Wednesday night. Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of health and human services, said Thursday the State is, in effect, telling, not asking, Californians to stop all nonessential travel. That includes canceling holiday travel plans, Ghaly said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

'V-Day': A Year After COVID-19 Pandemic Began In China, UK Is First In West To Start Vaccinations

A year after a mysterious new respiratory disease emerged in Wuhan, China, upending patterns of life and work, the United Kingdom on Tuesday became the first Western country to start vaccinating its population against a virus that has killed more than 1.5 million people worldwide and sickened tens of millions more. In a landmark moment in the coronavirus pandemic, dozens of hospitals in the UK's state-run National Health Service started administering the COVID-19 inoculation to people over 80 who are either hospitalized or have outpatient appointments scheduled. Some nursing home workers also received the vaccine. To read the full story, click [here](#).

'Very Inconsistent': 2 Allergic Reactions In The UK To COVID-19 Vaccine Puzzle Researchers

Two British people with severe allergies apparently had allergic reactions to Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine, raising questions about whether it is safe for people with preexisting allergies. In response, British regulators advised those with severe allergies to avoid the vaccine. It was not immediately clear what triggered the allergic reactions. There are no preservatives or animal products in the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, which have been known to trigger reactions with other types of vaccines. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Trump Hails Vaccine 'Miracle,' With Millions Of Doses Soon

President Donald Trump celebrated the expected approval of the first US vaccine for the coronavirus Tuesday as the White House worked to instill confidence in the massive distribution effort that will largely be executed by President-elect Joe Biden. Trump said the expected approvals are coming before most people thought possible. "They say it's somewhat of a miracle and I think that's true," he declared. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Biden calls for action on virus as he introduces health team

President-elect Joe Biden on Tuesday called for urgent action on the coronavirus pandemic as he introduced a health care team that will be tested at every turn while striving to restore the

nation to normalcy. Biden laid out three COVID-19 priorities for his first 100 days in office: a call for all Americans to voluntarily mask up during those 100 days, a commitment to administer 100 million vaccines and a pledge to try to reopen a majority of the nation's schools. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Cal/OSHA Releases Guidance for Employers on Emergency COVID-19 Regulations

California employers now have some guidance from the State in implementing the new "Emergency COVID-19 Prevention Regulations" ("CA ETS") that went into effect on November 30. Employers were given no lead-time to comply with these stringent new rules by the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board ("Cal/OSHA"). The CA ETS does contain obligations that employers already have in place, which are largely consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") guidance. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Hit Latinos Hard. Now Officials Must Build Trust Around Vaccine In The Community

Silvia Orellana knows how serious COVID-19 is. She sees its destructive steps every time she looks outside her perfume shop in Huntington Park, where the foot traffic has dwindled to almost nothing. The 45-year-old recently thought she had contracted the coronavirus, but it turned out to be the flu. Despite her fears — both personal and economic — she's resolute on her feelings about a COVID vaccine: "*Yo no me lo pondria.*" "I wouldn't get it." To read the full story, click [here](#).

California shatters more coronavirus records as officials warn rapidly filling hospitals 'may be overwhelmed'

County health departments around California combined to report 34,136 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday, according to data compiled by this news organization, a staggering increase of more than 10,000 over the previous single-day record. And late Tuesday the State was poised to break that record. The Bay Area also shattered its previous daily high Monday with 4,380 new cases, including all-time records in San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo and Contra Costa counties. More than 10 percent of tests for coronavirus in California are now coming back positive, far outpacing the 3 percent positivity rate the State saw in early November. Meanwhile number of patients being treated for coronavirus in hospitals and their intensive care units continues to rise. More than 11,500 people were hospitalized with the virus as of Monday, compared to fewer than 3,000 when the current surge began at the end of October; 2,526 of those patients were in ICUs, 3.5 times the number in those units in late October. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's tax windfall is \$15.5 billion, Newsom tells tech industry group

Gov. Gavin Newsom's upcoming state budget will assume California's tax windfall is \$15.5 billion, he said Tuesday during an event held by a technology industry trade group. The governor revealed the estimate during an online presentation during the annual state policy conference of Technet, said a source who attended the event but was not authorized to publicly discuss Newsom's comments. ... The estimate offered by Newsom is significantly smaller than the one made last month by the independent Legislative Analyst's Office, which put the size of the unexpected cash surplus at \$26 billion for the fiscal year that begins in July.

The report, which concluded that California's most wealthy taxpayers had not suffered as sharp a decline in earnings as expected, also noted the total windfall could be between \$12 billion and \$40 billion once final tax receipts are collected. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Some ICUS At California Hospitals Are Completely Full: 'It Is The Worst We Have Seen'

Some California counties on Tuesday saw intensive care units hit full capacity, and others were getting close to that level as COVID-19 cases continued to surge. At least three counties in the San Joaquin Valley have reached 0% capacity in their hospitals' intensive care units, making the State's agricultural hub the first area in California to become maxed out. In Santa Clara County meanwhile, conditions are deteriorating rapidly. Officials said there are only 31 ICU beds remaining — less than 10% of the County's capacity — and that a few hospitals have run out completely. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Confusion Grips Capitol Amid Flurry Of Stimulus Plans

In the span of an afternoon, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell suggested dropping discussions on the two biggest sticking points. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin offered a new proposal to Speaker Nancy Pelosi. A bipartisan group of senators is still working to finalize language on a \$908 billion package. And President Donald Trump endorsed new stimulus checks. While there's an uptick in the flurry of activity surrounding bipartisan talks, there's so far little evidence actual progress is being made, even as Democratic and Republican leaders insist that Congress will not leave for the holidays without a deal. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Job Openings Slipped in Early December

The number of job openings in the US edged down slightly in the first week of December, a sign of a softening labor market amid an upsurge in coronavirus infections and ebbing fiscal support for households. There were an average of 10.7 million job openings posted each day on online sites across the US this month, down slightly from November's 10.9 million, according to data from job-search site ZipRecruiter shared with The Wall Street Journal. The figures are the latest signs that the economic recovery underway since the spring is cooling. Job growth slowed markedly in November from the month before, the Labor Department reported Friday. Employers added 245,000 jobs last month, down from 610,000 in October, the Labor Department said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Data Shows Intensive Care Beds Are Nearing Capacity Across The US.

More than a third of Americans live in areas where hospitals are running critically short of intensive care beds, federal data show, revealing a newly detailed picture of the nation's hospital crisis during the deadliest week of the Covid-19 epidemic. Hospitals serving more than 100 million Americans reported having fewer than 15 percent of intensive care beds still available as of last week, according to a Times analysis of data reported by hospitals and released by the Department of Health and Human Services. Many areas are even worse off: One in 10 Americans — across a large swath of the Midwest, South and Southwest — lives in an area where intensive care beds are either completely full, or fewer than 5 percent of beds are

available. At these levels, experts say maintaining existing standards of care for the sickest patients may be difficult or impossible. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Chinese Aviation Body Suggests Flight Attendants Wear Diapers On Board Planes

As the coronavirus pandemic rages on, transportation officials around the world have been looking for ways to keep passengers and crew safe on board planes. On November 25, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) released new guidelines for the country's airline industry, which it oversees. [The document](#), titled Technical Guidelines for Epidemic Prevention and Control for Airlines, Sixth Edition, contains advice about the best hygiene practices to carry out on aircraft and in airports. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Health Care Professionals Can Decline COVID-19 Vaccine — For Now

Millions of health care workers are slated to receive the first batch of potentially lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines by the end of this month. But [not all of them want to be first in line](#). Only one-third of a panel of 13,000 nurses said they would voluntarily take a vaccine; another third said they wouldn't and the rest said they were unsure, according to a late October [survey](#) by the American Nurses Association. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Airlines Scrap International Ticket Change Fees as Demand Crumbles in Pandemic

Delta Air Lines and United Airlines are getting rid of international ticket change fees, joining American Airlines in the measure that aims to spur travel demand that has been decimated in the coronavirus pandemic. Delta, American and United in August dropped change fees for domestic flights. American last month expanded that to international travel, including long-haul routes. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Southern California Sheriffs Are Refusing To Enforce Stay-At-Home Orders

Sheriffs of counties that represent nearly 40 percent of California's population are refusing to enforce Gov. Gavin Newsom's newest stay-at-home order aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19. Sheriffs Alex Villanueva, Don Barnes, and Chad Bianco enforce the laws in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties, respectively. In response to Newsom's announcement, Villanueva said he won't "take part in enforcing stay at home orders at businesses," Barnes called compliance "a matter of personal responsibility and not a matter of law enforcement," and Bianco said he wouldn't be "blackmailed, bullied or used as muscle" in carrying out the order. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's health order falling on many deaf ears

In the Southern California oceanside city of Manhattan Beach, one arm of government is urging residents to stay home except for essential needs while another is encouraging them to get out and shop and even providing places where they can sit down to relax, eat takeout and watch the sun set on the Pacific. It's one example of confusing messages from governments as most of California is under a broad shutdown order that includes an overnight curfew to try to stem record-breaking coronavirus cases that threaten to overwhelm the hospital system. To read the full story, click [here](#).

United Airlines Flight Attendants Raise Alarm On Crew Quarantine Protocols

United Airlines is telling some flight attendants whose colleagues test positive for COVID-19 to keep flying and monitor for symptoms, three employees told Reuters, raising concerns among staff about the policy. United's major rival American Airlines, by contrast, removes all crew from service when they have worked with an infected person, a policy decision American flight attendants and the union representing them affirmed. To read the full story, click [here](#).

One-day US deaths top 3,000, more than D-Day or 9/11

Just when the US appears on the verge of rolling out a COVID-19 vaccine, the numbers have become gloomier than ever: Over 3,000 American deaths in a single day, more than on D-Day or 9/11. One million new cases in the span of five days. More than 106,000 people in the hospital. The crisis across the country is pushing medical centers to the breaking point and leaving staff members and public health officials burned out and plagued by tears and nightmares. All told, the crisis has left more than 290,000 people dead nationwide, with more than 15.5 million confirmed infections. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Moderna Begins Vaccine Trials for Teens

Pharmaceutical company Moderna is starting Phase 2/3 studies of the vaccine in health participants 12 to 17 years old. The company is hoping to be able to vaccinate adolescents before the start of the next school year. To read the full story, click [here](#).

IRS Sent \$1,200 Stimulus Checks To Random European Citizens, New Reporting Shows

Congress is debating another round of COVID-19 stimulus legislation right now. But as the details continue to be hashed out, new evidence keeps mounting that shows just how wasteful and inefficient the first stimulus bill was. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Did Paso Robles Defy Stay-At-Home Order? Business Owners Confused By Stance On COVID Rules

Paso Robles leaders on Friday confused business owners with their position on California's regional COVID-19 stay-at-home order — initially saying they would defy the order before clarifying that the city does not have the authority to alter state regulations. The Paso Robles City Council on Thursday night voted unanimously go against Gov. Gavin Newsom's order, [which divides the State into five regions and enacts stay-at-home orders](#) in areas where hospital intensive care unit capacity has dropped below 15% due to the virus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Downtown Ventura Restaurants Defying Stay-At-Home Order

Some restaurants in downtown Ventura have decided to protest against the outdoor dining ban. Most of Downtown Ventura is empty following the new regional Stay-At-Home order. Restaurants were ordered to switch to takeout and delivery only, but some owners are pushing back. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Californians Gloomy About Economy But Largely Back Newsom's Handling Of It, Poll Says

A majority of Californians approve of how Gov. Gavin Newsom is handling the economy during the coronavirus pandemic, even as their outlook for the State turns increasingly pessimistic, according to a new survey by the Public Policy Institute of California. The poll found that 58% of adults surveyed approved of Newsom's approach to the economy while 40% disapproved. The results were similar to the nonprofit institute's poll in May, when 59% approved of the governor's economic performance and 32% disapproved. But only 31% of adults surveyed in the new poll believe the State will have good times over the next year, while 68% believe there are bad times ahead. That is improved from July, when 80% of respondents expected bad times, but still among the worst results the public policy institute has found in nearly a decade. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Get Ready For Another Roaring '20s, UCLA Economic Forecast Predicts

UCLA economists issued an optimistic forecast Wednesday, predicting the US economy will experience "a gloomy COVID winter and an exuberant vaccine spring," followed by robust growth for some years. "The '20s will be roaring, but with several months of hardship first," according to the quarterly UCLA Anderson forecast. "These next few months will be dire, with rising COVID infections, continued social distancing, and the expiration of social assistance programs." The forecast, which assumes mass vaccination of Americans will take place by summer, predicts that annualized growth in the nation's gross domestic product will accelerate from a weak 1.2% in the current quarter to 1.8% in the first quarter of next year, then to a booming 6% in next year's second quarter and consistent 3% growth each quarter thereafter into 2023. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Placer County Faces Bleak Winter For Jobs As COVID-19 Stay-At-Home Order Takes Effect

Between August 2019 to August 2020, Placer County lost 89,500 jobs, with the leisure and hospitality sector shedding the most at 32,200 jobs. The accommodation and food services industries were hardest hit next, losing 23,600 jobs. The County has already allotted \$14 million of its \$41 million in CARES Act funding on grants for small businesses through its Placer Shares program. But according to a report by the county executive on December 1, more funding is still needed to meet the growing demand for business assistance. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Has Its Most Coronavirus Deaths In A Single Day As Cases, Hospitalizations Continue To Surge

More Californians died of COVID-19 on Tuesday than any other day, the latest milestone in an accelerating pandemic that is infecting and hospitalizing residents at levels far eclipsing any seen before. Tuesday's death toll, 219, edged out the previous single-day high of 214, which was recorded July 31, according to data compiled by The Times. The latest figure may be a harbinger of higher death tolls. Until this past week, California had topped 200 daily coronavirus-related deaths only two times. That number has been exceeded twice in the last five days. The seven-day fatality average, 135 Californians a day over the last week, is also at a level not seen since the darkest days of the State's summertime surge. To read the full story, click [here](#).

San Francisco Could Run Out Of ICU Beds In 17 Days If Coronavirus Infection Rate Continues

San Francisco will run out of intensive care beds in 17 days if the current rate of infection remains stable, the director of the San Francisco Department of Public Health said Wednesday. “That is if things don’t get worse and they very well may,” said Dr. Grant Colfax at a virtual news briefing. ... The reproductive rate for the virus in San Francisco is now at 1.5, which means every person who contracts it will infect 1.5 others. If that rate doesn’t come down, the number of residents in the hospital with COVID-19 will rise tenfold by early February, he said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

First Child In LA County Dies From Covid-19-Related Mis-C

A child died this week from the coronavirus-linked multisystem inflammatory syndrome, known as MIS-C, the first such reported death in Los Angeles County. This also marks the County’s first COVID-19-related death of a child. The patient, who was at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, had a “complex, preexisting cardiac condition” and died from complications tied to MIS-C, public relations officer Lauren Song said in a statement Wednesday. The hospital did not provide further details because of patient privacy. At least 145 cases of MIS-C have been reported among children in California, according to the State’s Department of Public Health. The Los Angeles County death appears to be the first in California, although no deaths linked to the illness have been recorded on the State’s database. Two children between the ages of 5 and 17 have died from COVID-19, data show. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Cal State Announces Plans For Fall 2021 Reopening Of Its 23 Campuses

Six days before its application window closes, the California State University system serving nearly half a million students has announced a plan for all 23 of its campuses to reopen next fall after more than a year of virtual instruction amid the COVID-19 pandemic. ... Overall enrollment at the university surged to a record high this fall, surpassing 485,000 students. But the number of first-time freshmen dropped significantly, and enrollment also fell at some Northern California campuses, following trends from previous years. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Unemployment Claims Rise To Highest Level Since September

The number of workers seeking unemployment benefits climbed sharply to 853,000 last week, as the broader labor-market recovery has shown signs it is slowing. Weekly initial claims for jobless benefits from state programs, a proxy for layoffs, increased by a seasonally adjusted 137,000 in the week ended December 5, the Labor Department said Thursday. Last week’s level of applications was the highest since September, but was still well down from a peak of nearly seven million in late March. The number of applications for a separate federal pandemic program also rose sharply last week. To read the full story, click [here](#).

New Day, New Rules: Everything To Know About California’s Confusing New Stay-At-Home Order

We’re in the middle of the worst [coronavirus](#) surge California has seen so far, and the State is making moves to shut back down again. This stay-at-home order is like the one we had in March in spirit, but it’s substantially different when it comes to exactly what can and can’t be open. The stay-at-home order is admittedly confusing, so we’re doing our best to clear it up for

you. Keep reading for everything you need to know about the new shutdown rules. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Clears Key Hurdle In California And Much Of The West

The COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech cleared another hurdle in California on Sunday, when a working group of scientists and experts endorsed its safety. The group, representing California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, reviewed the vaccine separately from the US Food and Drug Administration, which on Friday issued emergency use authorization. The group made its recommendation to the governors of the four states Sunday morning, officials said in a news release. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Despite Coronavirus Shutdowns, Revenues Expected To Rise In LA, Orange And Riverside Counties

The shortfalls many officials warn about are not so much pandemic-inspired as due to the regular, increasing costs of doing business: salary increases for workers, ballooning payments into retirement systems, retiree health care. At the state level, tax collections are healthier than expected considering the effects of stay-at-home orders on the economy. Personal income and corporate taxes are running billions of dollars ahead of pandemic-inspired projections, according to the state Legislative Analyst's Office. At the local level, property tax revenues are largely coming in as expected as well. Taxable sales, though, are down, translating into sales tax collections about 3.4% lower than last year. That's real money, but not as crippling as many have feared. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Farmworkers, Firefighters And Flight Attendants Jockey For Vaccine Priority

In California, a state of 40 million residents, the initial shipments of around 1 million doses won't come close to covering everyone at the front of the line. More than 2 million people fall into the Phase 1a category of vaccine distribution, which covers only those at risk of getting sick at a health care or long-term care setting. Even within that health worker category, there's jockeying to get to the front of the line, with pharmacists and dentists arguing for priority. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Getting Covid Vaccines To People Will Cost States Billions They Don't Have

State leaders say they are short billions of dollars in funding needed to successfully provide Covid-19 vaccinations to all Americans who want to be inoculated by health officials' June goal. The federal government is providing the vaccine, along with syringes, needles, face masks and shields. But state leaders say they must hire medical workers, provide community outreach and education, set up vaccination clinics and ensure storage capacity for vaccines. Some states are also concerned about having enough supplies, such as gloves and gowns, to protect health-care workers as well as people getting vaccinated. Officials in several states said they would spend whatever is needed to get residents vaccinated. Some said that might force spending cuts in areas like education, unless Congress provides additional funding or the federal government reimburses a large chunk of their rollout costs. To read the full story, click [here](#).

'We're Already Too Late': Unemployment Lifeline To Lapse Even With An Aid Deal

US lawmakers are struggling to hammer out another economic relief package before Congress adjourns next week. But for millions of Americans, the deadline may have already passed. Even if Congress reaches a deal, some 12 million unemployed people could see their benefits lapse after Christmas. Worker advocates say it could take weeks for the jobless aid programs to get back online as lags in programming for outdated state systems cause delays in relief checks. “We’re already too late,” said Michele Evermore, an unemployment insurance expert at the National Employment Law Project. From the time Congress passes an extension of unemployment aid, she said, many states wouldn’t be up and running for “three weeks or four weeks” at the fastest. To read the full story, click [here](#).

First Californians Receive Pfizer’s COVID-19 Vaccine

California’s first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine touched down Sunday evening at Los Angeles International Airport, and within hours doses were being distributed to county health departments and hospitals across the state. ... In addition to essential health care workers, California’s initial allotment of about 327,000 doses will go to the most vulnerable patients in long-term care facilities. It is unlikely that the general public will start receiving the vaccine until late spring or summer. About 33,150 vaccines were delivered Monday to four hospital systems in California — Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, St. Joseph’s Medical Center in Eureka, Kaiser Permanente in Los Angeles and San Diego County, which will distribute its doses to the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital and other local hospitals. An additional 24 health care systems were expected to receive their doses on Tuesday, according to Newsom. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Lawmakers Remain Sidelined As Pandemic Crisis Deepens

The rhythms of the legislative cycle mean that legislators have less authority to act swiftly than Newsom, who has introduced numerous executive orders this year, in addition to his administration issuing public health orders. Urgent legislative efforts to reopen schools, prevent evictions and aid businesses will need to proceed through a deliberative process that could take months when lawmakers return in January. The situation has, however, given the governor unprecedented levels of power. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Becerra Sues Amazon To Cooperate With California’s COVID-19 Safety Investigation

Attorney General Xavier Becerra accused Amazon of withholding information in California’s ongoing investigation into the company’s coronavirus protocols and COVID-19 cases at distribution facilities across the state. The move reveals fresh government scrutiny over Amazon’s workplace safety practices since the online retailer has been on a hiring spree throughout the pandemic. Becerra filed suit today in the Sacramento County Superior Court asking the court to order the e-commerce giant to comply with outstanding investigative subpoenas from the California Department of Justice. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Google Delays Office Return, Eyes Permanent Change To Part-Remote

Google has again extended the time many employees can work remotely amid the coronavirus pandemic, this time saying they can work from home until September. The company is also testing a hybrid workplace model it may adopt once it’s safe to return to offices, with

employees in company spaces for at least three “collaboration days” a week but otherwise remote, Google said Monday after the New York Times reported the work-from-home extension and pilot workplace plan. The Mountain View digital-advertising giant confirmed that CEO Sundar Pichai told employees in a message that Google was testing whether the hybrid model would “lead to greater productivity, collaboration, and well-being.” To read the full story, click [here](#).

New State Guidelines Keep High School Sports On Hold Until Jan. 25, Establish Tier System For Return

After a long wait, updated guidelines were issued Monday, Dec. 14 by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), which said it will use the state’s color-coded tiered system for COVID-19 monitoring as part of the map for what sports will be permitted for competition. While cautioning that counties need to first exit the state’s current regional stay-at-home orders, the guidelines state that competition could begin as early as Jan. 25 with facial coverings. The release Monday ended a wait since Aug. 3 for an update from the CDPH, which in helping the state navigate the coronavirus pandemic has limited high school and youth sports to physical conditioning and skill training. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Hundreds Of San Diego County Child Care Providers Have Closed Due To The Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has closed 535 child care businesses in San Diego County while simultaneously raising operating costs and shrinking revenues for an already struggling industry. The number of closures represents about 12 percent of child care providers in the county, according to a November report from the YMCA Childcare Resource Service. “We’re really seeing that child care providers are struggling to keep their doors open,” said Kim McDougal, executive director of the Childcare Resource Service. A fear of health risks is one of the main reasons child care programs have closed, a statewide survey of the programs by UC Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Child Care Employment shows. Child care providers are shouldering increased costs — paying for everything from extra cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment to outfitting their businesses to serve school-age children, McDougal said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Moderna Vaccine Is Highly Protective and Prevents Severe Covid-19, Data Show

Newly released data confirmed on Tuesday that Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine is highly protective, setting the stage for its emergency authorization this week by federal regulators and the start of its distribution across the country. The Food and Drug Administration intends to authorize use of the vaccine on Friday, people familiar with the agency’s plans said. The decision would give millions of Americans access to a second coronavirus vaccine beginning as early as Monday. To read the full story, click [here](#).

For the Retail Industry, 2020 Was a Wild Ride

Perhaps the most surprising part of the 2020 retail experience was that through the first 10 months of 2020, retail sales (excluding gas, auto and food services) rose 6.4% from the year-earlier period, according to the National Retail Federation’s analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Oddly, 2020 could turn out to be one of the best years in the overall retail sector in the past 20

years. The industry did experience a precipitous dip in April, with a sharp drop in sales of 5.5%, including a startling plunge in apparel sales of more than 86%. But concurrently, food-and-beverage store revenues were up nearly 27%. Losses and gains in these two sectors have been persistent throughout the year, as a dressed-down population focuses on essentials for their families and homes. To read the full story, click [here](#)

HIPAA May Apply to Employer COVID-19 Testing Programs

When COVID-19 first began to spread in the United States, a recurring question we received was whether employers become subject to HIPAA by taking employee temperatures or collecting medical information. The answer generally is that HIPAA does not apply to employers, and that this medical information is instead subject to other laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To read the full story, click [here](#).

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 note the email addresses to be removed.