

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA January 27, 2021

The United States reported a 21% drop in new cases of COVID-19 last week, as all but one state reported declines in new infections, and the number of coronavirus patients in hospitals also fell. The US reported 1.2 million new cases in the week ended January 24, down from 1.5 million new cases in the previous week. Cumulatively, nearly 419,000 people have died from the novel coronavirus or one in every 780 US residents.

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.

STAY AT HOME ORDERS

California state health officials have lifted the December 3, 2020 [Regional Stay Home Order](#). That means reopening plans for each County will revert back to the color-coded, [multi-tiered system](#) that has been in effect since July. The move returns 54 of the state's 58 counties to the "widespread" or "purple" tier. Now, Los Angeles [County's November 25, 2020 Health Officer Order](#) is in effect. Public Health will issue a new order this Friday, January 29, 2021, which will allow restaurants to open for outdoor dining with safety measures in place, as well as align the County's order with the State's order.

Allowable Now

- Private Gatherings – limited to 3 households and a total of 15 persons; outdoors only
- Family Entertainment Centers – open for outdoor operations (50% capacity)
- Museums, zoos, aquariums – open for outdoor operations
- Cardrooms – open for outdoor operations at 50% capacity
- Miniature golf, go karts, batting cages – outdoor operations at 50%
- Outdoor recreational activity - open
- Hotels, Motels – tourism and individual travel allowed
- Fitness facilities – open for outdoor operations
- Personal care – open at 25% indoor capacity
- Faith based services – outdoors only
- Indoor mall, shopping centers, lower-risk retail – open at 25% indoor capacity; food courts and common areas closed

Everyone in California must adhere to State Health Officer Orders. Counties and cities may be more restrictive than State mandates, but not less restrictive.

NATIONAL

Biden's Executive Orders On the Pandemic

President Biden has signed an executive order appointing [Jeffrey D. Zients](#) as the official Covid-19 response coordinator who will report to the president, in an effort to “aggressively” gear up the nation’s response to the pandemic. The order also restores the directorate for global health security and biodefense at the National Security Council, a group Trump had disbanded. Though it is not a [national mask mandate](#), which would most likely fall to a legal challenge, President Biden is requiring social distancing and the wearing of masks on all federal property and by all federal employees. He is also starting a [“100 days masking challenge”](#) urging all Americans to wear masks and state and local officials to implement public measures to prevent the [spread of the coronavirus](#). President Biden is also reinstating ties with the World Health Organization after the Trump administration chose to [withdraw the nation’s membership](#) and funding last year. Dr. Anthony S. Fauci will be the head of the US delegation to the organization’s executive board and will jump into the role with a meeting this week.

Vaccine May be Less Effective Against New Mutated Coronavirus

Early data shows that the Covid-19 vaccines on the market may not be as effective in guarding against more contagious strains of the coronavirus. Dr. Anthony Fauci said even if the drugs are less effective, they will still likely provide enough protection to make the vaccines worth getting. A handful of new strains of the coronavirus have emerged overseas that have given scientists some cause for concern. Some variants that have been identified in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil appear to be more transmissible than previous strains but not necessarily more deadly.

New US COVID-19 Air Travel Rules

Effective January 26, 2021, travelers arriving in the US must:

- Get tested for COVID-19 no more than 3 days before departing to the United States and show a negative test result to the airline before boarding OR 2) show documentation of recent recovery from COVID-19 to the airline before boarding.
- This new order applies to all air passengers — including US citizens and legal permanent residents — aged 2 years and older. It also applies regardless of the length of time spent outside of the United States. Acceptable documentation of recovery from COVID-19 includes both a positive viral test result within 3 months of travel (or the time period specified in current CDC guidance) AND a letter from

a healthcare provider or public health official stating that the passenger is cleared to end isolation. Passengers who have tested positive for COVID-19 will need to delay their travel until they meet the criteria to end isolation; learn more [here](#). Need more information? Visit [this FAQ page](#) at CDC.gov

VACCINATION

Vaccination in Los Angeles County

Only a very limited number of vaccination appointments are currently available for frontline health care workers and county residents aged 65 years and older. Residents in this high-priority age group may receive communication from their health care provider with information about COVID-19 vaccinations and how to receive one through their provider. They can click [here](#) to schedule an appointment for vaccination once more appointments become available. For those without access to a computer or the internet, a call center is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. to help schedule appointments at (833) 540-0473. Individuals are encouraged to use the website whenever possible to sign up for an appointment to avoid long wait times on the phone.

Long Beach, Pasadena, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino And Ventura Counties

For right now, eligibility and sign-up procedures vary by County. Most counties require that appointments be made by registering online.

Long Beach

For those in Long Beach, which has its own public health department, appointments can be made [here](#). Currently eligible for an appointment in Long Beach are health care workers, those 65 and older, long-term care facility residents, emergency response personnel and workers in the food sector like restaurant staff and grocery store staff. Those eligible were told to first check with their employers to see if they're offering the vaccine. If not, sign up [here](#) to be notified when shots are available. Next week, Long Beach will start vaccinating educators at Long Beach Unified School District and Long Beach City College.

Pasadena

Pasadena also has its own health department and has [expanded vaccine access](#) to residents 75 and older — in addition to health care workers and those at long-term care facilities. As of January 21, its [website](#) said the city is still waiting for a vaccine supply from the state before it makes appointments available.

Orange County

Orange County also started vaccinating all residents aged 65 and older, in addition to workers in [multiple health-related categories](#). Residents can only make an appointment online by clicking [here](#). On the website, you'll first answer a few questions, then click the blue "register" button. You'll be redirected to a page that lets you enter your information. Those with questions can call 714-834-2000. The County is providing the COVID-19 vaccine at [Disneyland](#), and other clinics and distribution sites throughout the County. Starting January 23, [Soka University in Aliso Viejo](#) will also serve as a "super POD" vaccine site.

Riverside County

In addition to expanding vaccine access to those 65 and older, Riverside County has also made the shots available to essential workers such as educators, dentists, mortuary staff, food and agriculture workers, pharmacy staff and those in emergency services — plus frontline health care workers. Residents were told to sign up for an appointment at a county-operated clinic through [gettested.ruhealth.org](#). But appointments filled up fast after the new site launched on January 23. The previous website being used to book appointments was experiencing technical issues so officials announced a new website was [created](#) to provide residents with a more efficient appointment making system. Seniors who need help making an appointment can call 800-510-2020 or 2-1-1. Those eligible for the vaccine in Riverside County can also sign up to get their shots at [Albertsons Pharmacy](#), [Apple Urgent Care](#) and [Ralphs Pharmacy](#). Information on eligibility and vaccine sites is [at the County's website here](#).

San Bernardino County

San Bernardino County is vaccinating health care workers and people in long-term care facilities, and has begun to vaccinate those 65 and older but does not have enough supplies to meet demand. Appointments at county-operated sites, and hospitals and pharmacies, can be made by clicking [here](#), but that website has been down on and off since it was [announced January 14](#). All appointment slots were full as of January 20, [the County said](#), and the sign-up website was down on January 21. Those who do manage to access the website and find an available slot can click the link next to their desired appointment date. They will then be redirected to a page that lets them fill in their personal information, including health insurance details, and book an appointment. San Bernardino County residents aged 65 and older can sign up [here](#) to get an email or text notification for updates on vaccination opportunities.

Ventura County

Unlike surrounding areas, Ventura County is still not vaccinating those 65 and older as of January 21. The vaccine is available to residents aged 75 years and older, health care workers and those in long-term care facilities. Those eligible can click [here](#) to book an

appointment You have to scroll to the bottom of the page and select which category you fall under and indicate whether you're looking to get your first or second dose. You will be redirected to a page that lists several different appointment dates. Click "check appointment availability" next to each date until you find one that lets you proceed to fill in your information and reserve a spot. Officials said the pace of vaccination is dependent on supply and it's not yet able to vaccinate other groups of residents.

Where to check for updates on vaccine eligibility:

- [Los Angeles County](#)
- [Long Beach](#)
- [Pasadena](#)
- [Orange County](#)
- [Riverside County](#)
- [San Bernardino County](#)
- [Ventura County](#)

EMPLOYER REMINDERS

California's COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Law: No Longer Effective, but Employers Beware

The [Duane Morris LLP](#) law firm has issued a very informative updated regarding California's supplemental paid sick leave requirements which expired on January 1, 2021. On September 9, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom enacted a law requiring all California employers with more than 500 employees, as well as certain industries exempted from the Families First Coronavirus Recovery Act (FFCRA), to provide up to 80 hours of supplemental paid sick leave (SPSL) to employees for COVID-related reasons. See the September 17, 2020 [alert](#). As drafted, this law was set to sunset on the later of December 31, 2020, *or* upon the expiration of any extension of Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the FFCRA. As of the date of this Congress has not extended the federal Emergency Paid Sick Leave requirements; thus, allowing it to lapse as of January 1, 2021. Accordingly, California's supplemental paid sick leave requirements are no longer effective as of January 1, 2021. As the law firm points out. California employers should proceed with caution and take care to not pull the proverbial rug out from under employees who were availing themselves of available SPSL prior to December 31 and who, but for its sunset, had SPSL leave remaining or seek to remain on leave into 2021. The California Department of Industrial Relations contemplates, for example:

- [A]n employee who exhibited symptoms and was recommended to isolate on December 28, 2020 may continue to utilize the SPSL they would be entitled to

even if that isolation is required to extend into 2021, and be paid for the time according to the requirements of the SPSL law.

- Employers should consult with experienced California employment-law counsel for guidance in navigating the implications of the SPSL, post its December 31, 2020, “sunset.” Moreover, it is possible that with a new administration and incoming Congress, there may be further developments relating to the FFCRA, which may impact the expiry date for the SPSL. Employers should continue to monitor for such updates to ensure compliance. In the interim, employers should ensure they comply with existing state, local and municipal mandatory paid-sick leave

Can employers mandate a COVID-19 vaccine?

According to the law firm [McDermott Will & Emery](#), the answer is Yes. Employers can implement a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy, subject to some conditions and exceptions. Mandatory vaccination policies must be:

- job related;
- consistent with business necessity; or
- justified by a direct threat.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has already deemed COVID-19 in the workplace to be a 'direct threat' with respect to requiring COVID-19 viral testing. Further, on December 16 2020 the EEOC published several FAQs to guide employers that choose to implement a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy. Any mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy must comply with federal and state employment laws, including that employers must consider whether making exceptions to their policy may constitute a reasonable accommodation for employees who cannot receive the vaccine due to legally protected reasons.

What are the exceptions that employers may have to make to their mandatory vaccination policy?

There are two federal employment laws that may require employers to make exceptions to a mandatory vaccination policy. Specifically, these are the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects employees with disabilities, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act 1964 which, in this context, protects employees with sincere held religious beliefs. Some states also have similar laws that will govern state to state. Both the ADA and Title VII require employers to make reasonable accommodations for employees where doing so will not constitute an undue burden. In practice, typically, this requires a somewhat individualized analysis. First, employers can generally require employees making exception requests to provide reasonable supporting documentation to verify the basis

for the request and help in the determination of whether a reasonable accommodation can be made. From there, the analysis differs between the ADA and Title VII – namely:

- the ADA excuses employers from accommodating employees only if any accommodation would pose a significant difficulty or expense; and
- under Title VII, employers need only show that any accommodation would pose more than a *de minimis* cost or burden.

In either case, the analysis of whether to provide an accommodation is employer and employee specific, requiring employers to consider factors such as:

- the employee's underlying limitation (e.g., with the ADA, employers need provide only a reasonable accommodation that permits the employee to do the job, not necessarily the employee's preferred accommodation);
- the employee's job and how this might affect the employer's options on accommodation (e.g., can the job be feasibly performed remotely?); and
- whether the accommodation under consideration would pose safety risks for the employee or others.

Mandatory versus voluntary vaccination policies

There are a number of factors that employers should consider when determining whether to make a COVID-19 vaccine mandatory or voluntary, including:

- the administrative burden;
- legal exposure; and
- public relations (PR) issues.

With a flu vaccine, the EEOC has stated that while employers can mandate such a vaccine, it suggests that employers simply strongly encourage but do not require vaccination. The flu is not COVID-19 and employers will be going through a different calculus in making their choices on COVID-19 vaccination, even if they do not currently mandate flu vaccination; however, the factors that employers must weigh are similar. If a vaccine is mandatory, employers should consider the following:

- They will have an increased administrative burden because they now must deal with requests for exceptions – an individualized analysis that will keep HR and legal teams busy. There is also an increased administrative burden to ensure that employers are tracking compliance.
- Denying an accommodation can generate potential exposure to claims for failure to accommodate under the ADA (disability) and Title VII (religion). Ultimately, the denial may be warranted and legally justified by employers, but this will not stop the certain wave of litigation on this issue. Moreover, because the area is relatively untested – and completely untested with respect to COVID-19 – these

lawsuits may be more difficult to defeat on summary judgment given open questions of fact as to whether the denied accommodation constituted an 'undue burden', for example. The recently published EEOC guidance ultimately leaves the decision-making burden and legal risk on employers.

- As much of the 'whether-to-accommodate' analysis will be employee specific, this leaves employers open to arguments that they have provided exceptions or accommodations on an unfair basis, giving rise to discrimination claims. Employers mandating a vaccine must work with their HR and legal teams in unison to provide as uniform a response as possible in similar situations.
- Taking adverse action, such as termination, with employees who refuse a COVID-19 vaccine can likewise generate potential exposure to wrongful termination claims.
- There is also some concern, given some of the unknowns as to potential side effects of a COVID-19 vaccine, that employees who must get the vaccine who then become ill, injured or die may be eligible to bring a claim against their employer. These claims would likely be swept into workers' compensation. Employers should also consider whether the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act may provide additional immunity, particularly those hospital and health system employers that are administering the vaccine or acting in a program planner capacity.

On the other hand, mandating a COVID-19 vaccine may provide some protection for employers, including to the extent that this will increase employee participation and ultimately create a safer, healthier workforce. Moreover, those that mandate the vaccine in their workforce may see PR benefits, providing patients, customers, employees and recruiting candidates with an increased sense of safety and confidence. That said, given the potential risks and burdens of mandating a COVID-19 vaccine, it is unsurprising that many hospitals – which have first access to the vaccine for their workforce – are making the vaccine voluntary and opting to 'strongly encourage' it, at least in the initial stages.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County To Launch Loan Program To Help Stabilize Small Businesses

The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) will launch the Small Business Stabilization Loan Program on January 28, 2021. The loan program is made possible through a \$10 million business recovery assistance fund issued by the US Economic Development Administration. The funds were made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Recovery Assistance and are intended to prevent

job loss and business closure. The Program will provide flexible and affordable capital to small businesses Countywide. The Small Business Stabilization Loan Program will provide eligible businesses with a competitive interest rate for loans ranging from \$50,000 to \$3 million. Businesses interested in applying for the Program must have been in operation for at least two years and are seeking working capital, equipment purchases, real estate acquisition, or refinancing of existing loans at higher interest rates.

The Small Business Stabilization Loan Program will start accepting applications on January 28, 2021, and will remain open indefinitely.

To apply for the Small Business Stabilization Loan, the applicant is required to attend an online *“Applying for An Affordable & Flexible LACDA Loan”* webinar to learn more about requirements of the application process and documentation needed. Webinars are currently available for registration. Upon completion of the webinar, the LACDA will then connect interested applicants with a Technical Assistance provider to assist with the business loan application. Further details are available at BizStabilization.LACDA.org.

LA County To Resume Outdoor Dining After COVID Stay-At-Home Order Is Canceled

Amid promising signs that the worst wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is starting to recede, California lifted all stay-at-home orders Monday — clearing the way for a wider reopening in many regions, including Los Angeles County. On the heels of the state’s announcement rescinding the regional stay-at-home order, officials in California’s most populous County said they planned to take advantage of the relaxed restrictions — allowing for the reopening of personal care services and outdoor dining at restaurants later this week. LA County health officials suspended outdoor dining in late November, prompting immediate outcry from pandemic-battered restaurateurs and pushback from residents and some politicians. Legal action since then has aimed to overturn the order.

SACRAMENTO

Governor Signs Medical Cannabis Executive Order In Response To COVID-19 Pandemic

Governor Gavin Newsom today signed an executive order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, extending the validity of medical cannabis identification cards that would otherwise have expired. The text of the Governor’s executive order can be found [here](#) and a copy can be found [here](#)

California measure aims to pay off 80% of most unpaid rent

California Gov. Gavin Newsom and the state's top two legislative leaders pledged to pay off 80% of most people's unpaid rent that has piled up during the [coronavirus](#) pandemic — but only if landlords agree to forgive the other 20%. The proposal, which must be

approved by the Legislature, could wipe out potentially billions of dollars in debt hanging over renters in the nation's most populous state by using federal relief money to compel landlords to forgive debt. It also would extend a law scheduled to expire next Monday that bans landlords from evicting people as long as they pay at least 25% of their rent. But housing advocates worry the plan gives landlords too much power to decide what happens to their tenants' debt. If landlords refuse to forgive the debt, the state will only pay 25% of their unpaid rent to ensure their tenants qualify for the law preventing evictions through at least June 30. But there appears to be no recourse for tenants whose landlords don't take the deal.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Hero Pay Lawsuit

The California Grocers Association filed a legal challenge to an ordinance tentatively approved by the Long Beach City Council mandating an additional \$4 in hourly "hero pay" for supermarket workers who face greater risk performing their jobs in the COVID-19 pandemic. The council approved the measure on first reading Tuesday; a final vote is scheduled for February 2. The CGA lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles federal court, asks the court to declare the pending hazard pay decree invalid and unconstitutional. The CGA also is seeking a preliminary injunction to stop implementation of the ordinance until a judge can rule on the merits of its lawsuit. The CGA alleges that the ordinance is illegal because, by singling out certain grocers and ignoring other groups that employ essential frontline workers, it violates the constitutional requirement that similarly situated people must be treated alike. The CGA also argues that the ordinance is preempted by the federal National Labor Relations Act, which protects the integrity of the collective-bargaining process.

California's Ban On Indoor Worship Upheld By Appeals Court

A federal appeals court has denied a Southern California church's request to overturn the state's coronavirus restrictions barring worship services indoors during the coronavirus pandemic, according to a newspaper report Saturday. The [Sacramento Bee](#) [said](#) Friday's ruling by the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals leaves the door open for addressing Gov. Gavin Newsom administration's limits on church attendance if a California county is in a less-restrictive COVID-19 tier. A three-judge panel ruled against South Bay United Pentecostal Church of Chula Vista over public health orders that restrict religious services from being held inside while virus case rates and hospitalizations remain high. While the panel agreed the San Diego-area church is suffering "irreparable harm," the judges believed California's rules to curb the spread of the virus did not violate First Amendment rights, the Bee reported. The judges said the ban on indoor service is directly tied to the state's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, which has killed 36,000 Californians and infected more than 3 million.

San Bernardino County's Lawsuit Against Newsom Over COVID-19 Restrictions Fails

San Bernardino County spent nearly \$76,000 in a failed lawsuit seeking to annul stay-at-home orders issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom in response to the coronavirus pandemic. County spokesperson David Wert disclosed the costs of the litigation in an email earlier this week after the California Supreme Court denied the County's petition to stay the orders six days before. In a January 13 conference, the suit did not receive the necessary four or more votes to grant review, according to Cathal Conneely, spokesperson for the Judicial Council of California.

[The County argued in its petition](#) that Newsom had exceeded the authority granted to him by the California Emergency Services Act, or ESA, by "continuing the Stay-At-Home law indefinitely," and that more control over coronavirus response should be given to local governments.

WHAT WE'RE READING

Additional Guidance For Cal Osha's Covid-19 Emergency Temporary Standards

In November, California quietly approved [the Division of Occupational Safety and Health's \("Cal OSHA"\) COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard \("ETS"\)](#). Almost immediately, Cal OSHA's ETS caused significant confusion and challenges for employers, who were already struggling with countless federal, state, and local requirements pertaining to COVID-19. Cal OSHA's ETS also appeared to create new and different notification obligations for COVID-19 cases than those already provided for under [AB 685](#) and standing health officer orders, and imposed confusing obligations on employers related to COVID-19 testing, work exclusions, and reporting of COVID-19 cases. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Israel is warning that a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine is 'less effective than we hoped' against COVID-19, and it could be a blow to the US and UK strategies

The Israeli official leading the country's coronavirus response warned that it is seeing a smaller effect than it hoped after giving a dose of the vaccine. The nation has had the world's fastest vaccine rollout, and as of January 19 had given a first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to 25.6% of its population, per Our World in Data. But a note of caution came from Nachman Ash, Israel's coronavirus commissioner, who told Israel's Army Radio that a single dose appeared to be "less effective than we had thought," according to The Guardian. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Look to the States for Employer Immunity From COVID-19 Lawsuits

In July 2020, the SAFE TO WORK Act (S. 4317) was introduced in Congress with the express purpose "to discourage insubstantial lawsuits related to COVID-19 while

preserving the ability of individuals and businesses that have suffered real injury to obtain complete relief.” The bill did not pass before the 116th Congress expired. But the need for employer protection during the continuing uncertainty of the pandemic remains. Cue the state houses. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California’s Surge Recedes But Alarm Grows Over Variants

California’s terrifying coronavirus surge, which has overwhelmed hospitals and killed thousands, appears to be subsiding, one of the state’s top health officials said on Tuesday. Covid-19 hospitalizations have decreased by 8.5 percent over the last two weeks, suggesting that a “surge on top of a surge” after the holidays hasn’t been as severe as was feared. The state’s overall transmission rate has decreased. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Newsom Promised 1 Million COVID-19 Vaccinations. But State Can’t Tell Whether He Hit Goal

A spokesperson for the California Department of Public Health said Wednesday that it’s likely Newsom reached the 1 million mark over 12 days, not 10 days as promised, but noted that coding errors and data lags have hampered the state’s efforts to accurately count and publicly report how many doses are administered each day. Newsom’s self-prescribed litmus test was announced as pressures mounted for him to address the state’s slow vaccination rollout, which has left hundreds of thousands of doses sitting on shelves despite the public’s desperate need for the lifesaving drug. “We’ve learned a lot about how significant the delay is in data,” Dr. Mark Ghaly, California Health and Human Services secretary, said Tuesday when asked about the status of the 10-day goal set by the governor. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Eviction Cases In California Projected To Double

California courts are bracing for eviction cases to double over the next year as pandemic-related financial woes deepen for thousands of renters across the state. Landlords are expected to file 240,000 new eviction cases — twice what occurs in a typical year, according to estimates by state court officials. The projection takes into account the looming expiration of state eviction protections, which end in late January. While Gov. Gavin Newsom hopes to extend the renter safeguards, he’s also asked the Legislature to increase the judicial system’s funding so that courts can prepare for an eventual surge in evictions. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Could a COVID-19 surge lead to shutdowns at LA ports? Officials plead for dockworker vaccines

Nearly 700 dockworkers at the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have contracted COVID-19 and hundreds more are taking virus-related leaves, raising fears of

a severe slowdown in the region's multibillion-dollar logistics economy. A growing longshore worker infection rate, which parallels the surge of the virus across California, is exacerbating a massive snarl at the ports due to a pandemic-induced surge in imports of general goods. Port executives, union leaders and elected officials are mounting an urgent campaign to initiate dockworker vaccinations, fearing that a labor shortage could force terminal shutdowns. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Says Vaccinating Everyone Over 65 Could Take Four Months

California recently said people 65 and older were eligible to get coronavirus vaccines. But getting two shots into everyone in that age group could take another four to five months, state health officials said Wednesday. Given the current rate of vaccines coming into the state — between 400,000 doses and 500,000 doses a week, in a good week — it will take an estimated 20 to 22 weeks to vaccinate the 65-and-over population alone, state health officer Dr. Erica Pan said during a state vaccine advisory committee meeting. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Will Resume Using Questioned Doses Of Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine

California's top epidemiologist, Dr. Erica Pan, said late Wednesday that an expert panel's review of apparent allergic reactions believed to be tied to a specific lot of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine found "no scientific basis" for continuing to withhold the doses. The state had received about 330,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine from the specific lot, which were distributed across the state. Last week, seven people experienced reactions at a drive-through clinic in San Diego, some of which involved rapid swelling. But none were anaphylaxis or life-threatening reactions, according to the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup. The symptoms were, however, severe and required medical attention, Pan said previously. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Cases, New Syndrome On The Rise Among Children, Especially Latino Children

At least seven California children have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began, more than 350,000 kids have tested positive for the virus and the number of youngsters diagnosed with a new, rare inflammatory syndrome continues to spread. All of these stats are on the rise just as a new highly contagious strain of the virus is worrying parents and experts alike and as the state tries to move toward reopening schools next month. "We are at a critical time because the overall number of cases of COVID are increasing so much," said Dr. Jackie Szmuszkovicz, pediatric cardiologist at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. "We are seeing more children with MIS-C the last few weeks following that big increase (of cases) in the community." To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Unemployment Claims Remained Elevated Last Week

About 900,000 workers filed for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market struggles to recover this winter. The number of jobless claims last week was down slightly from the week ended January 9, when applications jumped by more than 100,000 to 926,000. The Labor Department said the increase for the January 9 week—initially estimated as the largest weekly increase since March—was smaller than previously thought. Jobless claims, a proxy for layoffs, remain above the pre-pandemic peak of 695,000 and are higher than in any previous recession for records tracing back to 1967. To read the full story, click [here](#).

How the American Unemployment System Failed

The tussle in Congress last month over whether to extend emergency unemployment payments that were on the cusp of expiring — potentially pushing 12 million people into some form of destitution, according to the Century Foundation, a liberal policy research group — was a reminder that the system as designed has not been up to its task. Unemployment insurance is controlled and funded by the states, within loose federal guidelines. But Washington has been repeatedly called on to provide additional relief, including emergency patches to unemployment insurance after the Great Recession hit in 2008. Indeed, it has intervened in response to every recession since the 1950s. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Fauci Returns to White House Spotlight, This Time Under the Biden Administration

Leading infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci on Thursday made his first appearance at a White House press briefing under the Biden administration to talk about the coronavirus. Fauci, who was criticized several times by President Donald Trump during the pandemic, said it was "somewhat of a liberating feeling" to return to the podium and "let the science speak." While Fauci defended the comments he made during briefings under the previous administration, he said some statements from others like Trump made him uncomfortable. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Testing Wristbands, Masks Signs of a New Boss at White House

The clearest sign that there's a new boss at the White House is the deference being paid to coronavirus public health guidelines. It's a striking contrast to Donald Trump's White House, which was the epicenter of no less than three separate outbreaks of COVID-19, their true scale not fully known because aides refused to discuss cases publicly. While the Trump administration was known for flouting safety recommendations, the Biden team has made a point of abiding by the same strict guidelines they're urging Americans to follow to stem the spread of the virus. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Flood Of Funerals: Archdiocese Launches Contactless Burials Amid Soaring Pandemic Demand

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles announced Friday its Catholic Cemeteries and Mortuaries started offering contactless burial options due to state and local public health restrictions and high demand for funeral services. "We follow our Church's teachings of the Corporal Works of Mercy which includes burial of the dead. Just as when we give water to the thirsty, food to the hungry or shelter the homeless, all of us at Catholic Cemeteries and Mortuaries see God's face in the families and patrons we serve," said Brian McMahon, Director of Community Outreach of the Catholic Cemeteries and Mortuaries. To read the full story, click [here](#).

President Joe Biden's Battle Plan To Beat Covid-19 Is "Spot On,"

But Restoring Americans' Trust In "science-based leadership" won't be easy after four years of Donald Trump, public health experts said. "The single most important thing the Biden administration needs to do to fight the pandemic is communicate honestly and openly with the American people about what needs to be done," said Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health. "The constant obfuscation and misinformation from the Trump administration, all the 'this is a hoax' stuff, that killed our pandemic response." To read the full story, click [here](#).

LA County Won't Be Fully Vaccinated Until 2022 Unless Pace Improves, Officials Warn

There is growing concern that Los Angeles County residents won't be fully inoculated against COVID-19 until next year unless supplies of approved vaccines get a major boost. LA and the rest of the nation are struggling to get enough vaccine to meet swelling demand, especially after California allowed people 65 and older to gain access to the inoculations. But while many are clamoring for the vaccine, officials say they are getting only a fraction of what they need. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Keeps Key Virus Data Out Of Public Sight

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has from the start said his coronavirus policy decisions would be driven by data shared with the public to provide maximum transparency. But with the state starting to emerge from its worst surge, his administration won't disclose key information that will help determine when his latest stay-at-home order is lifted. State health officials said they rely on a very complex set of measurements that would confuse and potentially mislead the public if they were made public. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California's Bill For Fighting Trump In Court? \$41 Million So Far

California has spent \$41 million over the past four years fighting the Trump administration over its regulations and rollbacks involving climate change, immigration,

consumer rights and more. During Donald Trump's presidency, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra filed lawsuit after lawsuit, challenging the various federal agencies that set new national policies. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Another Person Dies After Receiving Covid Vaccine

Another death linked to the [COVID vaccine](#) has occurred, this time to a person who received the vaccine in California. The person died just hours after being administered the vaccine, according to a Facebook post by the Placer County Sheriff's Office, which is located in the greater Sacramento area. The person, who has not been identified, tested positive for the coronavirus in late December and received the COVID vaccine on January 21. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Lawmakers Propose Extending Eviction Moratorium Until June 30

Under a legislative agreement, California would extend its eviction moratorium to the end of June. Landlords would get an incentive to forgive back rent using an extra \$2.6 billion from federal relief. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Biden Administration To Buy Enough Doses To Vaccinate US Population By End Of Summer

The Biden administration on Tuesday said it would boost the supply of [coronavirus vaccines](#) sent to states by about 16% for the next three weeks and will purchase enough additional doses to vaccinate most of the US population with a two-dose regimen by the end of the summer.

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

Dollar Retreats As Riskier Currencies Rebound

The US dollar fell across the board as riskier currencies found a firmer footing on Tuesday, a day after worries over vaccine rollouts and the outlook for US fiscal stimulus boosted demand for safe havens. Mounting coronavirus cases and caution ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy meeting this week has dulled appetite for risk, lending support to the dollar against a basket of currencies in recent sessions, but investors were once again nibbling at riskier currencies on Tuesday. To read the full story, click [here](#).

UK's 'Tsunami' Of Grief: Coronavirus Deaths Pass 100,000 As Outbreak Still Rages; Fatalities In UK Worse Than WWII Civilian Toll

The United Kingdom has become the first country in Europe to pass 100,000 coronavirus-related deaths as infections around the globe topped 100 million. With more than 2.1 million dead worldwide, people the world over are mourning loved ones,

but the UK's toll weighs particularly heavily: It is the smallest nation to pass the painful milestone.

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.