

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA

April 21, 2021

One in 4 Californians is now fully vaccinated for COVID-19 as the state continues its dash to inoculate residents widely and ward off any potential resurgence of the pandemic.

VACCINATION

Vaccination Appointments Now Open To All 16 And Older In California

Everyone in California 16 and older can now book COVID-19 vaccine appointments on the state's [My Turn appointment system](#). My Turn officials said the online system can handle up to 300,000 transactions per hour and that they expect it to handle the demand. Officials released a new version of the My Turn website Wednesday night with the new eligibility and are in the process of adding language support for the first time in Arabic and Persian. People can also make appointments by phone at (833) 422-4255, with language support for more than 200 languages. Authorities have counseled patience for residents seeking appointments, suggesting it will take a while for everyone who wants a vaccine appointment to get one.

30% Of California Adults Fully Vaccinated, 20% Partially Vaccinated Against COVID-19

As the state sprints toward 24 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine given, California hit another pair of remarkable milestones Wednesday: more than 30% of its adults are now fully vaccinated, and over half have one dose of a two-shot inoculation. The California Department of Public Health reported providers across California have administered 23,760,123 doses over the course of the rollout, averaging more than 380,000 shots per day over the past week. CDPH said in its daily update it is again dealing with data processing issues leading to incomplete counts. But even with that reporting issue and doses undercounted, the state says more than 9.33 million people are fully vaccinated and 6.34 million are partially vaccinated, for about 15.7 million at least partially vaccinated through Tuesday.

Pfizer CEO Says Third Dose Of Vaccine 'Likely' Needed Within 1 Year

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said that people are likely to need a third dose of a Covid-19 vaccine within a year of getting fully vaccinated and may subsequently need annual shots to protect against the coronavirus. Pfizer and BioNTech, are studying how long the vaccines' protective immunity will last. Their findings will guide whether additional booster shots will be necessary. Moderna is similarly studying an upgraded version of its Covid-19 vaccine that is specifically designed to target the South African variant, which some experts worried may evade existing vaccines.

REOPENING

Less Than 1 In 4 Workers Has Gone Back To The Office

An average of 24% of employees in 10 major U.S. cities were back to the office as of April 7, down nearly a full percentage point from the week before, according to Kastle Systems, which provides keycard entry systems used by many companies and tracks patterns of workers' card swipes. In Los Angeles, the average at Kastle's 148 buildings was 22.1%. Like the national average, it took a significant dip during the winter COVID surge but had been rising again before the latest virus resurgence. Although beneath the US average, LA's offices were fuller than five other cities tracked by Kastle, including San Jose at 16.7% and San Francisco at 13.4%. As employees were trickling back to some offices, other workplaces were turning off the lights and turning over the keys.

California On Track To Reopen June 15 Despite J&J Pause

California will follow federal officials' advice to pause the use of Johnson & Johnson's one-shot coronavirus vaccine, but the delay will not hamper the state's plan to reopen its economy on June 15. Johnson & Johnson's vaccine currently accounts for only 4% of the state's supply from the federal government.

California Schools Should Fully Reopen In The Fall, But No Guarantees

The Governor has repeatedly declined to guarantee a full reopening in the fall, barring an unforeseen shift in the direction of the pandemic. The Governor says he is working with the Legislature to provide direction, while acknowledging diverse needs among the 1,000 school districts. "Mandates are not as often looked on as favorably as you might think," he said. "I expect all our kids to be back" in the fall. More than 9,000 of the state's 11,000 public schools have reopened, with hundreds more returning to in-person learning in some form, the Governor said. Most have adopted a hybrid model, with students in class part of the day or part of the week. In many districts, including San Francisco and Oakland, most middle and high school students will not return to classrooms this school year.

Public Health Protocols for Libraries, Movie Theaters, Restaurants, Breweries/Wineries, and Bars

The following updated reopening protocols have been posted on the [Los Angeles County COVID-19 website](#).

- [Libraries](#)
- [Movie Theaters](#)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Breweries, Wineries, and Craft Distilleries](#)
- [Bars](#)

CDPH, Cal/OSHA Publish New COVID Guidelines Around Indoor, Private Events

COVID-19 guidance went into effect last week to determine the rules of [indoor seated live events and performances](#) as well as private venues and events. In the guidance available on the Blueprint for a Safer Economy website, an overview is given that explains the reasoning behind creating specific guidance for gatherings in a COVID-19 world.

New Health Officer Order and Protocols

Below are links to the revised Health Officer Orders (HOO) and updated/new protocols for certain sectors:

- [Revised HOO](#): Reopening Safer at Work and in the Community for Control of COVID-19: Blueprint for a Safer Economy—Orange Tier Risk Reduction Measures.
- [Updated and New Protocols](#):
 - [Libraries](#)
 - Youth and Adult Recreational Sports Leagues – [Appendix S](#)
 - Live Events and Performances (Outdoor) – [Appendix Z](#)
 - Live Events and Performances (Indoor Seated) – [Appendix Z-1](#)
 - Private Events (Meetings, Receptions, and Conferences)— [Appendix BB](#)

To see the new Health Officer Order and all updated Los Angeles County protocols and guidance documents related to COVID-19, including information on the vaccine, click [here](#)

SACRAMENTO

Lawmakers Revive Virus Tax Break For Businesses

California lawmakers on Monday revived a multibillion-dollar tax break for some businesses after the Biden administration assured them the proposal would not jeopardize the state's own federal coronavirus aid. The federal government has given California companies about \$97 billion in loans during the pandemic, the majority of which business owners won't have to pay back. Congress also gave \$26 billion to California's state government as part of the most recent coronavirus relief package President Joe Biden signed last month. Congress already lets business owners deduct expenses associated with those coronavirus loans from their federal taxes. But California business owners still owe state taxes on that money.

California Lifts Coronavirus-Era Indoor Worship Limits

Last week, the state lifted its limits on indoor worship services in the face of US Supreme Court rulings that struck down the coronavirus public health mandates. However, the state Department of Public Health guidelines still said indoor gatherings were “strongly discouraged” and advised limiting the numbers to 25% of a building’s capacity for the two-highest levels of the state’s four-tier COVID-19 restrictions. The recommended capacity for the two lower levels — those areas with moderate to minimum spread — is 50% capacity. “Location and capacity limits on places of worship are not mandatory, but are strongly recommended,” the new guidance stated and said the changes were a response to recent court rulings. The Supreme Court has dealt with a string of cases in which religious groups have challenged coronavirus restrictions impacting worship services. While early in the pandemic the court sided with state officials over the objection of religious groups, that changed following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg last September and her replacement by Justice Amy Coney Barrett. In November, the high court barred New York from enforcing certain limits on attendance at churches and synagogues in areas designated as hard hit by the virus.

Lawmakers Push Reforms At EDD

California legislators are pushing ahead with reforms targeting the state’s troubled unemployment agency as lawmakers condemned it for yet another significant error that has interrupted benefit payments to thousands of jobless residents. Agency officials apologized for a new computer glitch that has prevented many people from filing new claims online, but lawmakers note it is just the latest in a string of technological problems that have plagued the state Employment Development Department since the pandemic began more than a year ago. A package of bills to help overhaul EDD’s operations approved by a key legislative committee would allow direct deposit of unemployment benefits, provide written instructions in more languages on how to get benefits, and require the agency to better explain to claimants why they have been disqualified from receiving financial assistance,

NATIONAL

EIDL Advance Application

The SBA has launched a new round of Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Advances - called Targeted EIDL Advance - which provides eligible businesses with \$10,000 in total grant assistance. If you received the EIDL Advance last year in an amount less than \$10,000, you may be eligible to receive the difference up to the full \$10,000. The combined amount of the Targeted EIDL Advance and any previously received Advance will not exceed \$10,000. Businesses eligible for the Targeted EIDL Advance must meet ALL the following eligibility criteria:

- Located in a low-income community, as defined in section [45D\(e\) of the Internal Revenue Code](#). The SBA will map your business address to determine if you are in a low-income community when you submit your Targeted EIDL Advance application.
- Suffered economic loss greater than 30 percent, as demonstrated by an 8-week period beginning on March 2, 2020, or later, compared to the previous year. You will be required to provide the total amount of monthly gross receipts from January 2019 to the current month-to-date.
- Must have 300 or fewer employees. Business entities normally eligible for the EIDL program are eligible, including sole proprietors, independent contractors, and private, nonprofit organizations. However, agricultural enterprises, such as farmers and ranchers, are not eligible to receive the Targeted EIDL Advance.

Before You Apply: To help applicants determine if they are located in a low-income community, as defined in section 45D(e) of the Internal Revenue Code, the SBA is making available a mapping tool at <https://sbaeidl.policymap.com/app>. Note that the business address must be **located** in a low-income community to qualify for the Targeted EIDL Advance. Check the map to see if your business address meets the low-income community eligibility requirement before you apply.

What You Will Need: To assist you in completing the Targeted EIDL Advance questions, we recommend that you have available a copy of your 2019 Federal Tax Return and the business' monthly gross receipts for each month from January 2019 through the most recent month-to-date period. The information you provide will be used to determine if your business meets the economic loss greater than 30 percent requirement above. You will also be asked to confirm that the information provided in your original EIDL application is still accurate. If there are any changes, you may be asked to provide documentation to determine if you are eligible for a Targeted EIDL Advance. Applicants that pass the initial eligibility requirements will also be required to electronically sign an IRS Form 4506-T allowing the SBA to obtain tax transcripts directly from the IRS before we can approve your request for the Targeted EIDL Advance.

The SBA's goal is to process all requests within 21 days of receiving a completed application. All application decisions will be communicated via email. Due to limited available funds for the Targeted EIDL Advance program, the SBA will not be able to reconsider applications through an appeal process, so please make sure that your information is correct when submitting your application. If your request is approved, you will receive an email notification and an ACH deposit to the bank account you provided in your application. It is very important that you double-check your bank

account information carefully before submitting. Incorrect or incomplete information may result in an inability to approve your request or successfully disburse your funds. Carefully review the information below regarding bank account deposits. For more details about the Targeted EIDL Advance program, please visit [SBA.gov/coronavirusrelief](https://www.sba.gov/coronavirusrelief).

US setting up \$1.7B national network to track virus variants

The US is setting up a \$1.7 billion national network to identify and track worrisome coronavirus mutations whose spread could trigger another pandemic wave. White House officials unveiled a strategy that features three components: a major funding boost for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health departments to ramp up gene-mapping of coronavirus samples; the creation of six “centers of excellence” partnerships with universities to conduct research and develop technologies for gene-based surveillance of pathogens; and building a data system to better share and analyze information on emerging disease threats, so the knowledge can be turned into action.

EMPLOYER ISSUES

Reopening & Employers Obligations

[Jackson Lewis](#) said in a recent COVID-19 post that the difficulties for employers are not over on June 15. For much of the COVID-19 pandemic, California struggled to get infection rates under control, and businesses grappled with compliance with a multitude of COVID-19-specific statutes and regulations. Employers also were tasked with navigating existing California employment laws, which did not contemplate a worldwide pandemic. Below is their detailed perspective.

Workplace Safety

In November 2020, California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal OSHA) passed the [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#). The ETS imposed certain minimum requirements for covered workplaces, including:

- Implementation of written COVID-19 prevention programs and measures
- Reporting and recordkeeping requirements
- Worker exclusion when employees have COVID-19 or been exposed
- Management of COVID-19 infections and outbreaks
- Investigation of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks

Though COVID-19 rates are decreasing in California, the requirements of the ETS remain in place for employers. The overlapping state and county health orders on health and safety in the workplace is another issue. California’s Labor & Workforce Development Agency, in conjunction with the Department of Industrial Relations has [an employer](#)

[portal](#) that allows employers to locate county and industry-specific guidance for COVID-19 workplace protocols and requirements.

Leave and Accommodation

While the federal government's Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) granting emergency COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave expired December 31, 2020, a tax credit remains for the voluntary continuance of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave. Initially, California allowed its 2020 COVID-19 supplemental sick leave law to expire, which resulted in many local supplemental sick leave laws being extended into 2021. Then, on March 29, 2021, California passed an [expanded statewide supplemental paid sick leave requirement](#) under Senate Bill 95. The expanded paid sick leave applies to employers with more than 25 employees and requires additional time off in 2021 for COVID-19-related reasons beyond the prior law's covered reasons (*e.g.*, vaccine-related absences). The 2020 law applied to employers with at least 500 employees, but the new law applies to small employers and created an added complexity for employers that have been providing FFCRA sick leave and taking advantage of the federal tax credits.

The California [labor commissioner has released an FAQ](#) and [required poster](#) for the new supplemental paid sick leave. The paid leave requirements under the supplemental paid sick leave remain in place until the end of September 2021.

In conjunction with the ETS issued by Cal OSHA, employers must maintain an employee's compensation when they are excluded due to a work-related COVID-19 exposure or possible work-related exposure and remain available to work. However, the California labor commissioner has indicated an employer may require an employee to use supplemental paid sick leave before providing Cal OSHA exclusion pay.

DFEH Guidance

The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), the agency charged with administering the state's employment discrimination statute and regulations, has issued [updated COVID-19 guidance](#). The new guidance includes how employers should handle:

- COVID-19 Inquiries and Protective Equipment
- Employees with COVID-19 Symptoms or Infection
- Job-Protected Leave
- Reasonable Accommodations for Employees with Disability/Vulnerable Populations
- Vaccination

The vaccination guidance from the DFEH indicates that an employer may require employees to receive an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine if certain criteria are met, including:

- The employer may not discriminate against or harass employees or job applicants based on protected characteristics.
- The employer must provide reasonable accommodations as required by applicable law.
- The employer may not retaliate against anyone for engaging in protected activity, such as requesting a reasonable accommodation.
- The employer properly handles any medical information obtained from employees.

California's new COVID-19 supplemental sick leave law provides paid time off to attend a vaccine appointment or if an employee cannot work or telework because of vaccine-related symptoms.

Wage and Hour

California has been at the forefront of providing premium pay to employees, especially grocery workers and other industries in 2021. This new "[hero pay](#)" development has spread across California with more than 20 localities implementing their own ordinances and still more under consideration. Typically, the ordinances require a wage increase of \$3 to \$5 above the minimum wage for covered employees for a specific period. Employers must review if any of their locations are affected by hero pay ordinances.

While there has been no statewide statute mandating additional pay, the [Health Care Workers Recognition and Retention Act](#) is pending in the state senate. If passed, it would mandate additional premium pay for healthcare workers.

Return to Work

Employers will be faced with a number of compliance issues as offices and other worksites open or expand capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring compliance with all state and local guidelines, returning employees from furlough, work-from-home arrangements, reduced schedule, or other employment actions, as well as the proper handling of accommodation requests.

Though California does not have a statewide right of reemployment, [several cities have such reemployment requirements in place](#). The local ordinances require employers to offer positions to employees who were laid off due to COVID-19 closures first before hiring new employees. Usually, the ordinance requires that employees with more seniority be given priority in rehiring. Regardless of whether any such ordinance applies, employers should establish an objective process for making decisions about returning employees to the workplace.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

3 Restaurant Owners Sue State, LA County Over COVID-19 Closures

Three owners of dine-in restaurants are suing the state and Los Angeles County, demanding compensation for what they say was the government's use of their property to mitigate an emergency when they were forced to stop indoor dining under coronavirus restrictions. James P. Trani, Steve Patrick and John Marvoich brought the 250-page suit in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleging the forced closures amounted to a government taking, and violated their rights of free speech and assembly. The court papers do not name the restaurants they own. "The government's order being without any connection to the plaintiffs, and each of them, is an irrational and unnecessary order to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus by punishing the irrelevant plaintiffs who are virus-free and pose absolutely no risk of spreading the virus," the suit states. "Plaintiffs allege that the government shutdown order was not rationally related to a or any governmental interest as it was unsupported by any evidence and defined logic, nature, and/or common sense."

WHAT WE'RE READING

USC Survey Finds More Californians Want To Keep Working, Learning From Home After The Pandemic Ends

A new survey from USC and the California Emerging Technology Fund explored Californians feelings about remote work, remote learning and telehealth after more than a year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers say they have found hesitancy about each of these practices have been swept away. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Warns Against Travel To 80% Of All Countries Due To COVID-19

The US is planning to issue Level 4: Do Not Travel advisories for around 80% of all nations, the Department of State said Monday. The [travel advisories](#) will be updated this week "to better reflect" current [COVID-19](#) health notices about other countries from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The Department of State strongly recommends US citizens reconsider all travel abroad," a press release from the department said. "This does not imply a reassessment of the current health situation in a given country, but rather reflects an adjustment in the State Department's Travel Advisory system to rely more on CDC's existing epidemiological assessments." To read the full story, click [here](#).

COBRA Is Free For Six Months Under The COVID Relief Bill

Americans who lost a job in the last 18 months are able to stay on or join their former employer's healthcare plan for free through September 30. That provision of the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) went into effect April 1. More than 2 million people could benefit, according to the [Congressional Budget Office](#). The way it works is through the

federally administered program known as COBRA. If you work at a company with more than 20 employees and lose your job, you can remain on your employer-sponsored health insurance plan for 18 months through COBRA. To read the full story, click [here](#).

A Year In, Here's What We Know About Vitamin D For Preventing COVID

When the pandemic hit, many Americans turned to vitamins and supplements in hopes of boosting their immune systems. Scientists also raced to study them. Vitamin D, perhaps more than any other, captured the attention of researchers. Even the nation's top infectious disease doctor, Anthony Fauci, embraced the idea of using the vitamin to help keep COVID-19 at bay, [saying](#) in September that he takes a supplement to avoid being deficient and "would not mind recommending" it to others. So should you take vitamin D to prevent or even treat COVID-19? To read the full story, click [here](#).

OC Will Offer Digital Vaccine Record As An Option, Not A Mandate

Orange County health officials still plan to provide digital proof people can use to show they've been vaccinated against COVID-19, but county leaders stress they will not mandate that anyone get a so-called "vaccine passport" and one won't be required to get services from the county. The OC Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, April 13, faced an angry crowd demanding the county abandon plans to require that people carry proof of vaccination to go about their daily lives – but no such plans exist. Currently, when people get a vaccine shot, they're given a white card issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It gets filled out by the vaccine provider with the name and birth date of the recipient, the date and location of the shot, and the maker and lot number of the vaccine. The OC Health Care Agency said last week it will test a digital vaccination record, likely a QR code that could be scanned. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Los Angeles Unified Reopens For In-Person Learning

Los Angeles Unified, the second-largest school district in the nation, has faced criticism for not reopening sooner, as other large and neighboring school districts reopened over the past several months for in-person instruction. In September, a group of parents filed a class-action lawsuit accusing the district of failing students with inadequate instruction during the pandemic. When the district's reopening plan was announced, some criticized the plan to reopen middle and high schools without implementing in-person instruction time. Instead, the older students enrolled in the district will sit in their classrooms while tuning into their lessons via their regular video platform. To read the full story, click [here](#).

What Are The Roadblocks To A 'Vaccine Passport?'

While the federal government has said it will not introduce digital vaccine passports by federal mandate, a growing number of businesses — from cruise lines to sports venues — say they will require proof of vaccinations for entry or services. Hundreds of digital health pass initiatives are scrambling to launch apps that provide a verified electronic record of immunizations and negative Covid-19 test results to streamline the process. The drive has raised privacy and equity concerns and some states like Florida and Texas have banned businesses from requiring vaccination certificates. But developers argue that the digital infrastructure is secure and will help speed up the process of reopening society and reviving travel. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Europe Scrambles As J&J Vaccine Delay Deals Another Blow

While some European Union countries opted for caution, Poland said that it would go ahead and administer the first batch of 120,000 doses that had arrived. Others like Spain and Portugal were left without a choice: They are still waiting for their first deliveries. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, distributed in Europe by its subsidiary Janssen, is a key part of the continent's immunization campaign. Of the four vaccines currently approved in the EU, it is the only one that requires just a single dose to be fully effective. That makes it ideal for hard-to-reach, vulnerable groups, such as those who are homeless or migrant workers. But the drug maker decided Tuesday to delay deliveries to Europe after the American regulator recommended a pause in the vaccine's use in the United States while the rare clot cases are examined. That is only the latest blow to the vaccine rollout in Europe, which had already experienced a similar blood clot scare with the AstraZeneca vaccine, also critical to its campaign. To read the full story, click [here](#).

San Francisco Releases Huge, Detailed List Of New Reopenings And Expansions

San Francisco is taking new steps in opening up the city, easing restrictions April 15 to allow indoor music concerts, graduation ceremonies, conferences and more to resume. Additionally, many activities and businesses that have already swung open their doors can expand capacity including outdoor dining, indoor family entertainment and both indoor and outdoor sports and recreation. City officials announced Wednesday it's aligning more of the requirements in the public health order with those outlined by the state for counties in the orange tier. The city released a lengthy, detailed list of reopenings and expansions — a sign life in the city is slowly returning to normal. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Stanford Enrolls Children As Young As 2 In Pfizer Vaccine Trials

Stanford Medicine on Wednesday began administering shots to children ages 2 to 5 in a trial for the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine, marking another step forward in getting younger children vaccinated. Stanford's trial is part of a larger, nationwide Pfizer study that is testing the vaccine in children as young as 6 months old. The advancement of pediatric

vaccine trials is important because even though children are at lower risk than adults of developing severe disease and dying from COVID-19, many have nonetheless fallen ill and died. It will also be critical to inoculate children in order to reach higher immunity levels in the overall population, since they can spread the virus to others even if they themselves do not become ill. To read the full story, click [here](#).

‘Zoom In A Room’? California’s Schools Lag In Reopening Push

Frustrated parents in San Francisco have coined a new phrase for their latest classroom reality: “Zoom in a Room.” In Los Angeles, students can start going back to school in person, but more than half say they will stick with distance learning. More than a year after the coronavirus pandemic forced California’s classrooms to close, some of the largest school districts are welcoming back students this week. But the most populated state is lagging the rest of the country — and in some cases offering options that parents say are unacceptable. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Jobless Claims Plunge To 576,000, Lowest Since Pandemic

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits tumbled last week to 576,000, a post-COVID low and a hopeful sign that layoffs are easing as the economy recovers from the pandemic recession. The Labor Department said Thursday that applications plummeted by 193,000 from a revised 769,000 a week earlier. Jobless claims are now down sharply from a peak of 900,000 in early January and well below the 700,000-plus level they had been stuck at for months. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US Retail Sales Surged In March On Stimulus, Vaccines

US shoppers boosted retail spending by nearly 10% in March as federal-stimulus funds made their way to households, warmer weather set in and the economy reopened more fully from pandemic-related restrictions. Retail sales—a measure of purchases at stores, at restaurants and online—jumped 9.8% last month, the Commerce Department reported Thursday. The increase was the largest monthly gain since last May, during the initial bounceback from lockdowns early in the pandemic. The gain also followed a revised 2.7% drop in sales during February, a level that was slightly better than initially estimated. To read the full story, click [here](#).

State And Local Tax Considerations For Remote Employees – And Their Employers

Government mandated work-from-home orders have created a remote workforce, creating a host of complex state and local tax issues for both employers and their employees. Even as these orders expire, a common trend among employers is to implement flexible, long-term (and in some cases permanent) work-from-home arrangements. Among the many important issues for employers to consider will be whether they will now be subject to various business taxes in the state or local

jurisdiction where the employee is working remotely (e.g., sales, income, franchise taxes) and whether the employer should be withholding state and local income taxes from the employee's paycheck in the remote work jurisdiction. Additionally, it is important for employees teleworking to understand the extent to which they are subject to income taxes in each jurisdiction to ensure they file proper individual income tax returns. To read the full story, click [here](#).

'Breakthrough' Cases Of Vaccinated People Who Get COVID May Be Key To Unlocking Immunity

Public health officials are increasingly interested in breakthrough cases, which are defined as people who test positive and have symptoms of COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated. These cases should be rare — and are fully expected. The vaccines are not 100% effective, and with the virus still circulating fairly widely across California, a few cases in people who are fully vaccinated are bound to happen. California doesn't yet publicly report breakthrough cases, but a survey of Bay Area counties found more than 100 confirmed or suspected. The breakthrough cases are important to track because they could provide useful clues to how the vaccines work and how the virus is changing. To read the full story, click [here](#).

J&J Privately Asked Rival Covid-19 Vaccine Makers to Probe Clotting Risks

Johnson & Johnson privately reached out to Covid-19 vaccine rivals to ask them to join an effort to study the risks of blood clots and speak with one voice about safety, but Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. declined. As concerns mounted last week over rare cases of blood clots, J&J asked AstraZeneca PLC as well as Pfizer and Moderna to join its efforts looking into the reports, people familiar with the matter said. J&J, through emails and phone calls, also sought to build an informal alliance to communicate the benefits and risks of the shots and address any concerns raised among the public by the blood-clot cases, some of the people said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

As LA County Reopens, Officials Plan For COVID-19 Economic Recovery

Los Angeles County saw a \$735-million drop in sales tax revenue due to the pandemic-related economic slowdown, but the county will avoid layoffs and furloughs and funding to large departments, including the Sheriff's Department, will remain largely unchanged, according to a budget proposal unveiled by officials on Monday. County Chief Executive Fesia Davenport said in a presentation to reporters that despite the financial hit from the pandemic, her "leaner" budget proposal still includes millions to help finance services to address homelessness, child welfare, healthcare and mental health. ... The last budget, approved amid the COVID-19 crisis, included \$369 million in cuts to departments funded with locally generated money and eliminated 2,586 positions. That money doesn't appear to be returning, and sacrifices will be made. County departments

submitted more than \$2 billion in requests that won't be likely funded. Of this, only \$530 million of the most critical requests will be considered later this year as the county knows more about tax revenues and other revenue streams. To read the full story, click [here](#).

US. Health Officials Are Examining 'A Handful' Of New, Unconfirmed Reports After J.& J. Vaccine Pause, The CDC. Director Says.

Federal health officials are investigating "a handful" of new, unconfirmed reports that have emerged after Johnson & Johnson injections were paused nationwide, to determine whether they might be cases of a rare, serious blood clotting disorder that caused the pause, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday. It is unclear as yet whether the vaccine was responsible for the original few cases. "Right now, we are encouraged that it hasn't been an overwhelming number of cases but we are looking and seeing what has come in," the director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, said at a White House news conference on the pandemic. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Repatriation Of Americans Early In Coronavirus Pandemic Put Communities At Risk, Federal Report Finds

A report from the US Government Accountability Office released Monday, April 19, said federal agencies involved in the repatriation efforts did not follow proper procedures and often did not establish which agency was in charge, causing delays in quarantine orders and institution of safety protocols. The report was critical of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for not coordinating with other federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. At times, each agency acted independently, instead of working together, the GAO report said. To read the full story, click [here](#).

EU Agency Links J&J Shot To Rare Clots, Says Odds Favor Use

The European Union's drug regulatory agency said Tuesday that it found a "possible link" between Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and extremely rare blood clots and that a warning should be added to the label. But experts at the agency reiterated that the vaccine's benefits outweigh the risks. The European Medicines Agency made those determinations after a very small number of blood clot cases in people who had gotten the vaccine were reported in the United States. The agency said a warning about the blood clots should be added to labels for the Johnson & Johnson's vaccine and that these rare blood disorders should be considered "very rare side. To read the full story, click [here](#).

NJ Wedding Venue Says Gov't Orders Caused Loss, Not Virus

A New Jersey wedding venue told a federal court Monday its insurance policy's virus exclusion doesn't allow a [Liberty Mutual](#) unit to escape class claims for denying coverage related to the COVID-19 outbreak, arguing the catering facility's losses were caused by government orders and not the novel coronavirus. Nanina's In The Park called on the court to knock down Ohio Security Insurance Co.'s bid to defeat its proposed class action, saying the provision did not bar the banquet hall's coverage when its losses stemmed from orders issued by Gov. Phil Murphy that forced the business to close its doors in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19. 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, please reply with a "Remove" in the subject line and note the email addresses to be removed.

Previous Updates

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