

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/business/s-b-county-program-helps-prevent-hunger-and-also-helps-restaurant-owners-and-employees/article_1e144312-d83b-11ea-97c4-cb44082ae276.html

S.B. County program helps prevent hunger and also helps restaurant owners and employees

Aug 6, 2020



San Bernardino County has developed several programs to help residents and businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, including Great Plates Delivered, a food delivery campaign for senior residents. (Contributed photo by San Bernardino County)

Responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and statewide stay at home orders, San Bernardino County has launched a variety of programs -- ranging from limits on evictions to the COVID Compliant Business Partnership -- to help residents and businesses cope with these unprecedented challenges.

Much of the county's focus has been assisting the area's most vulnerable populations.

One of the county's programs is Great Plates Delivered, a food delivery campaign for senior residents that is being implemented by the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Services, 2-1-1 San Bernardino County and the County Joint Information Center, along with the State and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.



delicious, healthy food, as well as the volunteers who have given their time to deliver those meals.”

----- NONPROFITS AND OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ALL PLAY A PART

Great Plates Delivered is not the only food assistance campaign helping county residents cope with recent difficulties.

Efforts also include Food Assistance programs such as Meal and Diaper Distribution program and the Grab and Go School Meals program.

In the latter program, the county’s Preschool Services Department has been working with Sunrise Produce to distribute 150,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables to county residents during the first two phases of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Famers-to-Families program. The county is anticipating approval on Phase 3, which will add meat, eggs and dairy to the menu of items that will be given to residents.

More than 100 food banks and pantries have been providing meals to county residents who have lost their jobs or have otherwise been severely affected by economic challenges. Operated by nonprofits, school districts, churches and other faith-based organizations, these food banks have played a critical role in ensuring county residents avoid going hungry during these arduous times.

“We are very proud of the way the county has been fulfilling its mission to meet the needs of the community, and impressed by the heartfelt, collaborative spirit we’ve seen from community groups and private businesses alike,” Hagman said. “It is truly gratifying to see how members of the local community have joined together during a time of crisis to help our fellow citizens.”



DAAS began by recruiting 37 local restaurants to participate in the program. These community-minded establishments prepare three nutritious meals a day for delivery to older residents who meet a variety of criteria (e.g., having pre-existing health conditions and income levels well below the federal poverty limit).

In addition to assisting county residents, the program has benefited restaurant owners and employees by generating a crucial new source of revenue.

“Because of the program, we were able to bring back 75 percent of our staff,” said Mark Furuuchi, owner of Gourmet Gourmet Catering. “Thus far we have served nearly 35,000 meals, and the response from recipients has been 100 percent gratitude.”

Chef Henry Gonzalez, who owns Spaggi's Restaurant, agreed.

“I train my staff to cook with passion -- as if they were cooking for their own parents or grandparents,” he said. “With our food, seniors are feeling the love of their county and the state. At the same time, this program has helped our business, it’s helped our vendors, and it’s helped us keep all our people employed.”

Since its launch in early May, the program has already provided more than 485,000 meals to almost 2,700 residents living in 60 communities throughout the county. Great Plates Delivered was originally slated to conclude in June, has been extended until Sept. 9.

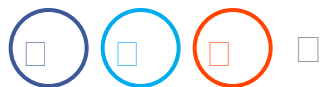
“We’ve been very pleased with this program and its impact on residents who are susceptible to the disease and face a variety of related challenges,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “We are thankful for the participating restaurants, which have helped ensure people obtain





LOCAL NEWS • News

San Bernardino County reports 398 more coronavirus cases, 3 new deaths



By **JEFF HORSEMAN** | jhorseman@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 12:29 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 12:36 p.m.



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San Bernardino County added 398 confirmed coronavirus cases and three more COVID-19 deaths in its Thursday, Aug. 6, update.

That represents a 1.2% increase in cases from the Wednesday, Aug. 5, report. The daily updates usually reflect new diagnoses and deaths that occurred over the span of a few days, not what happened from one day to the next.

A warning on the county’s COVID-19 website states that recent data may not be accurate “due to unresolved technical issues with the state’s reporting system.”

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Since the pandemic began, the county has recorded 34,635 confirmed cases and 490 deaths from the virus.

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Here are the latest numbers, according to county and state public health officials.

San Bernardino County

Cases: 34,635, up from 34,237 Wednesday

Deaths: 490, up from 487 Wednesday

Hospitalizations: 541 Wednesday, same as Tuesday, Aug. 4; Suspected patients: 76 Wednesday, up from from 58 Tuesday

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Intensive-care unit patients: 170 Wednesday, down from 174 Tuesday; Suspected patients: 7 Wednesday, up from 6 Tuesday

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Coronavirus state tracker: California had 8,142 new cases and 169 new deaths, hospitalizations remain down

How Riverside and San Bernardino counties are spending coronavirus dollars

Recoveries: 26,398, up from 25,560 Wednesday

Tuesday); deaths: 218. Employees: 913

Skilled-nursing facilities: Residents: 1,447 (last update

State prisons in San Bernardino County: 193 active in-custody cases Thursday

People tested: 261,736, up from 258,071 Wednesday

To see a full list of community-by-community cases, click [here](#).

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Jeff Horseman | Reporter

Jeff Horseman got into journalism because he liked to write and stunk at math. He grew up in Vermont and he honed his interviewing skills as a supermarket cashier by asking Bernie Sanders “Paper or plastic?” After graduating from Syracuse University in 1999, Jeff began his journalistic odyssey at The Watertown Daily Times in upstate New York, where he impressed then-U.S. Senate candidate Hillary Clinton so much she called him “John” at the end of an interview. From there, he went to Annapolis, Maryland, where he covered city, county and state government at The



NEWS CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY • News

Apple fire could be 'very active' in Morongo Valley, expert warns



A sign on San Gorgonio Avenue on the Banning Bench seen on Aug. 5, 2020, thanks firefighters for their work to spare homes during the Apple fire. (Brian Rokos, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

By **RICHARD K. DE ATLEY** | rdeatley@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 8:40 a.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 7:57 p.m.



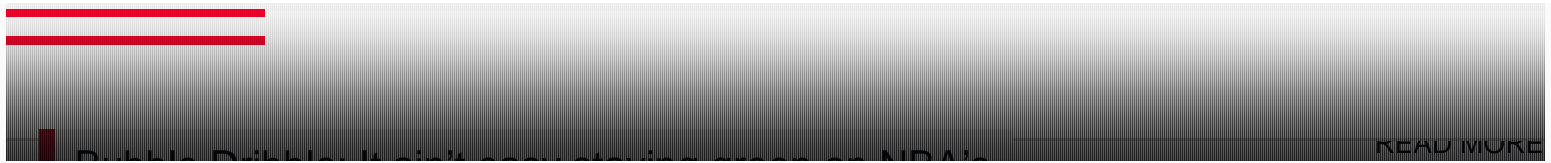
High winds and rugged terrain created expectations for a “very active” Apple fire in the Morongo Valley, one fire expert said Thursday afternoon, Aug. 6.

The Apple fire burning in the San Bernardino National Forest was 30% contained and had consumed 28,085 acres Thursday.

“Out toward the Morongo Indian Reservation, we’re expecting very active fire” Thursday, fire behavior analyst Dennis Burns said, in an early afternoon briefing. “The winds have really increased ... (Wednesday) we had gusts up to 50 mph ... it’s really starting to push the fire.”

But the reservation is not threatened, said Phil Southard, a spokesman for the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. He said the reservation is several miles from the Morongo Valley.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



“The Morongo Band of Mission Indians is continuing to closely monitor the Apple fire in coordination with local public safety officials. Evacuation orders affecting Morongo Reservation residents were lifted Wednesday,” Southard said in an email.

The Apple Fire ignited July 31 in Riverside County’s Cherry Valley, and quickly grew to thousands of acres, fueled by gusting winds and dry brush. Later, fire officials said the blaze started from a vehicle’s faulty exhaust.

The Morongo Valley was added early Thursday afternoon, Aug. 6, to San Bernardino County communities given evacuation warnings, meaning residents may be asked to leave if fire conditions worsen. Forest Falls, Pioneertown and Rimrock are the other areas under a warning.

MAP: This map shows where the Apple fire is burning

Riverside County also added an evacuation warning Thursday for an area east of Whitewater Canyon, north of the 10 Freeway and west of Highway 62 and south of the county line — also in the Morongo Valley area.

The fire in the valley, Burns said, changed from a fuel-driven fire to a wind-driven fire.

Westerly winds of 25 to 35 mph were forecast for the San Gorgonio Pass, with gusts to 50 mph Thursday, decreasing to 45 mph overnight, the National Weather Service said.

Firefighters established an anchor point in the area, Burns said, with hopes the fire “doesn’t come around behind them. But they’re going out into the wilderness, and once we get out into the

wilderness, we can't use heavy equipment, which slows down our progress of being able to get lines on the fire."

He said smoke on Wednesday in the Morongo Valley prevented aerial tankers from dropping retardant there. And firefighters started out earlier than usual because they had stayed the night on the fire line. "We're going to just keep our fingers crossed and see what happens today," he said.

Oak Glen remains under an evacuation order. Burns said crews made "really good progress" Wednesday on getting a defensive line ahead of the fire in that area.

The fire was described as slow for both the area near Oak Glen and in the San Gorgonio Wilderness.

The blaze, which has forced some residents out of their homes for seven days, is estimated to be fully contained on Aug. 17. Containment is when firefighters create and hold a fire break around the perimeter of a wildfire. The break can be created by natural means, such as a stream or a river or roads and freeways, or by firefighters digging lines around the fire with bulldozers and hand tools.

The fire continued burning northeast into the San Gorgonio Wilderness, which has been closed to the public since Aug. 2. Burns said more firefighters might be brought into the wilderness area on Friday.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District extended its smoke advisory through Thursday for the San Gorgonio Pass, east San Bernardino Mountains, Coachella Valley and east Riverside County.

The agency advised residents in those areas to limit exposure and stay indoors with windows and doors closed, seeking alternate shelter, and avoiding vigorous physical activity.

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Investigators say the Apple fire was caused by a faulty exhaust system on a diesel vehicle just before 5 p.m. Friday, July 31, along Oak Glen Road in Riverside County's Cherry Valley.

The fire has destroyed four homes and eight other structures. One firefighter was injured. Cal Fire estimates

Apple fire destroys 4 homes, 8 other structures — containment up to 20 percent

Banning residents, evacuees voice concerns over Apple fire

Apple fire caused by diesel vehicle's exhaust system, investigators say

an estimated 2,586 homes in several communities had been forced to evacuate at the height of the fire, affecting 7,800 people.

The Pacific Crest Trail is closed in the area of the fire, about 20-1/2 miles of the trail from the Cottonwood Trailhead to the San Bernardino National Forest boundary, the Bureau of Land Management said.

Staff Writer Brian Rokos contributed to this report.

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Richard K. De Atley | Reporter

A journalist since 1975, for City News Service in Los Angeles, The Associated Press in Los Angeles and New York, and The Press-Enterprise, Richard DeAtley has been Entertainment Editor, a features writer, courts and breaking news reporter. He is currently a business reporter for The P-E. He is a Cal State Long Beach graduate, lifelong Southern Californian (except for that time in New York -- which was great!), he has been in Riverside since 1992, and has watched and reported as a great community grew into its own identity.

rdeatley@scng.com

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Cal Fire responds to wildfires in the State Responsibility Area and to fires that threaten that area.

< People with medical conditions, livestock owners advised to leave Morongo Valley now

Aug 06, 2020 12:22 PM



By Stacy Moore Hi-Desert Star

MORONGO VALLEY - The Fire Department issued a warning to Morongo Valley residents to be ready to evacuate around noon Thursday.

Everyone with medical conditions and livestock should leave now, the Fire Department said in the warning.

The decision to issue the warning was made by federal



News

People with medical conditions, livestock owners advised to leave Morongo Valley now



Operations branch director Alex McBath goes over the map of the Apple Fire for a meeting in Pioneertown Thursday.

fire managers at the incident command center in the Oak Glen area, said Division Chief Robert Springer from the Morongo Valley Fire Department.

“Evidently the fire activity that’s in the mountains and hills directly west of us has passed what’s caused a trigger mark,” Springer said Thursday afternoon.

“In the event that the fire continues on the current activity path, they wanted to issue the warning in case it goes into what’s called a mandatory evacuation,” he explained.

“It could happen in hours, it could happen in days or it could not happen at all,” he added.

“Right now there’s no imminent danger, it’s just preemptive, precautionary.”

He warned that if the fire moved into Morongo Valley, the local fire department doesn’t have enough manpower to rescue large numbers of people. That’s why they want people to be ready to leave if mandatory evacuations are called.

“If it goes to mandatory we don’t have the resources to start moving people and things out, so we try to get them time so they can get ready,” Springer said.

“This is the time to prepare and if you think you’re going to have a problem when someone tells you you have to leave, that’s not the time to realize you’re going to have to call someone and it’s going to take three hours for them to get you and get you out,” Springer said.

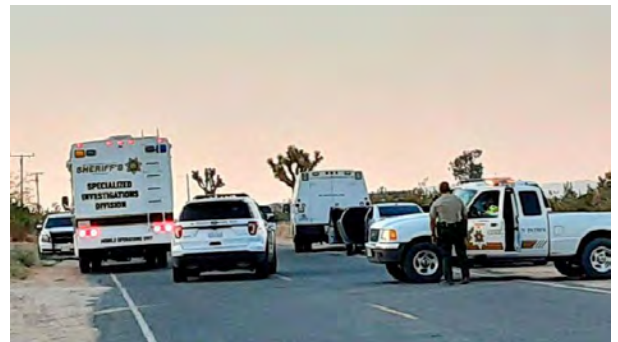
“If people decide to stay and they get caught back in the

Apple Fire: Firefighters make progress, but warn locals to say ready



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Pioneertown and Rimrock told to be ready to evacuate for Apple Fire

mix of it, we're not going to be able to save some of them."

With that, his message to residents, especially people with medical problems, animals or other challenges to quick escape, is this: "Think diligently, think safely, get going."

The fire department says evacuees should take the following items with them, taking enough to last at least three days:

Wallet and purse (including personal identification).

- House and car keys,
- Eyeglasses.
- Medications.
- Proper clothing.
- Family pet(s).
- Cash.

These supplies may need to last for an indefinite period of time. It is suggested that persons bring three days' worth of personal supplies to meet their individual needs.

People who need additional help with special need should contact the American Red Cross Disaster Relief at (855) 891-7325.

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LOCAL NEWS, TOP STORY

OVER 200 AT PIONEERTOWN APPLE FIRE BRIEFING LAST NIGHT

AUGUST 7, 2020 | Z107.7 NEWS | LEAVE A COMMENT

Firefighters held another informational brief Thursday about the Apple fire, this time in Pioneertown. More than 200 people showed up for the briefing, which firefighters said was their largest crowd ever. Firefighters were generally optimistic about their progress against the Apple fire, but Managing editor Tami Roleff said they did share their concerns with residents...



Alex McRath, the Operations Branch Director of the California Interagency Incident Management Team 2 discusses how earlier fires in the area are slowing the growth of the Apple fire. Tami Roleff photo

“Millard Canyon ... that’s been giving us fits here over the last couple of days.”

Public Information Officer Daron Wyatt said firefighters have been able to keep the fire to the west of Millard Canyon, which is directly north of the Morongo Casino, and they were pleased with their

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efforts so far to contain the fire.

“Overall, the fire is looking fairly good, but we’re not out of the woods yet.”



Sheriff's Lieutenant Mike Walker told residents that if an evacuation order is issued, there would be increased patrols through neighborhoods to deter looters. Tami Roleff photo

Mike Minton of the Incident Management Team 2 warned residents that if the fire crosses Millard Canyon and the Whitewater Canyon drainage, it will trigger changes in evacuation status for Pioneertown, Rimrock, and Morongo Valley.



Smoke from the Apple fire blankets the hills surrounding Pioneertown. Tami Roleff photo

“That trigger point is the main primary Whitewater Canyon drainage. If the fire ... crosses the Whitewater drainage .. we’ll be upping the evacuations from a warning to an order. If the fire has enough momentum with energy and wind to drive it hard across the Whitewater drainage, there’s going to a limited amount of time, and you all will need to go.”



One of three fire strike crews that are staged in Pioneertown. Tami Roleff photo

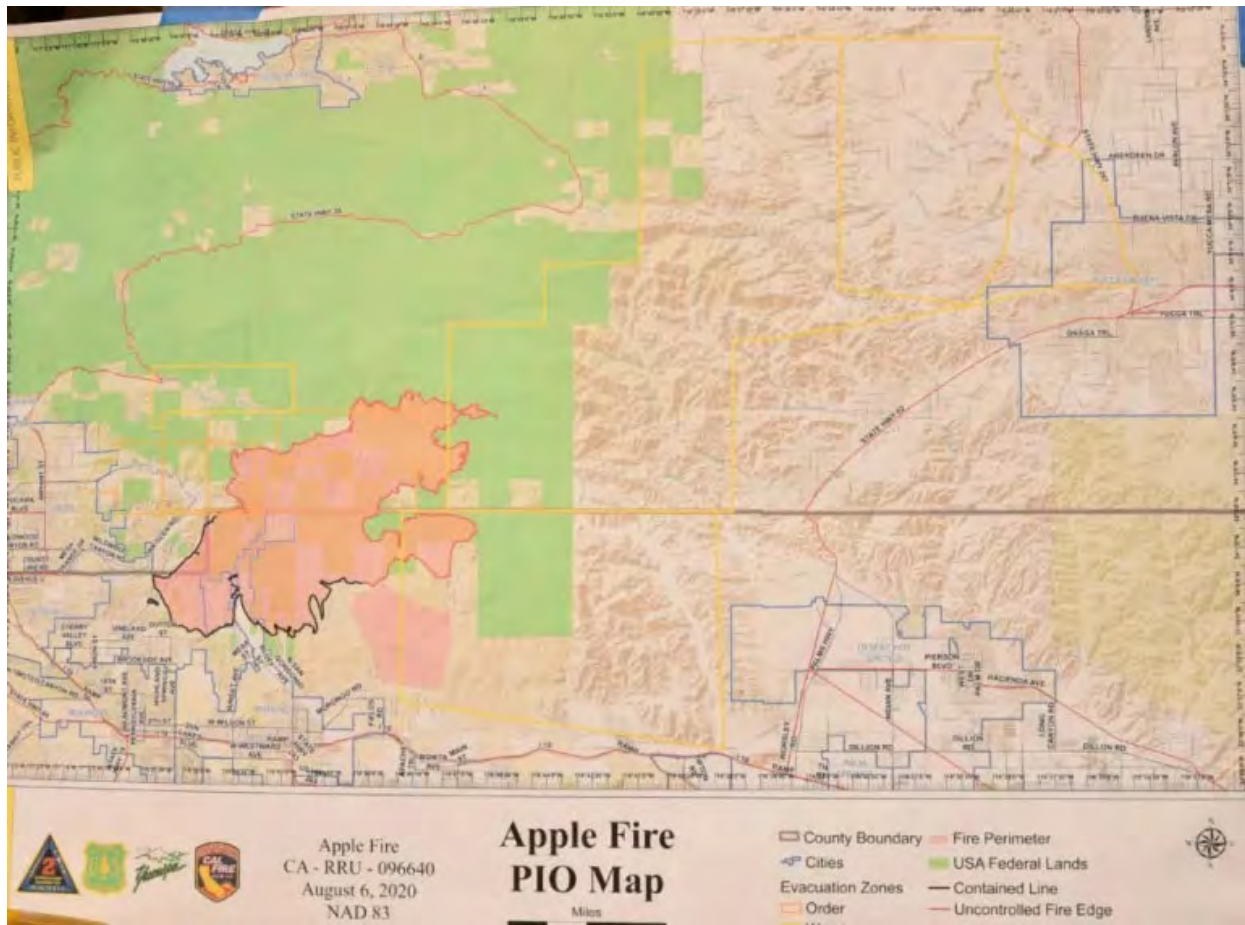
The edge of the Apple fire is estimated to be about four miles from Whitewater Canyon drainage, and it's about another six miles to Pioneertown.

Firefighters have established a line around the southern edge of the Apple fire, and said lines made by bulldozers and fire retardant have done their jobs at containing the flames.



Smoke makes the mountains surrounding Pioneertown hazy. Tami Roleff photo

The Apple fire has more personnel working it than any other fires in the state right now, but several other fires have started recently, and resources are starting to become tight at the Apple fire. Airplanes that had been dumping fire retardant on the blaze the past few days have been diverted to other fires, although 14 helicopters are still dropping water and retardant on the lines of the Apple fire.



The Apple fire is outlined in black, to indicate containment lines, and red, to show where the fire is still spreading. The yellow lines indicate areas covered by evacuation warnings. Tami Roleff photo

Members of the Incident Management Team 2 stressed that while their progress against the fire looks good now, it can quickly change with little or no warning. If the fire crosses the trigger point of Whitewater Canyon drainage, the evacuation warning will change to an order, and residents will required to evacuate. They urged residents to start preparing now for evacuation.



The Lake fire in 2015, and the Sawtooth fire in 2006 (shown in yellow in the upper right), created burn scars that are slowing the spread of the Apple fire (outlined in red). Tami Roleff photo

Lieutenant Mike Walker from the Sheriff’s Department told residents that if a mandatory evacuation order is issued, deputies will patrol the area, go door to door, and drive through neighborhoods with a PA system announcing that they need to leave.

Yucca Valley Town Manager Curtis Yakimow said that small animals can be brought to the town’s animal shelter during a mandatory evacuation, and horses can be brought to the Yucca Valley Equestrian Center.

A meeting will be held tonight for residents of Yucca Valley and Morongo Valley. The location and time have not been announced yet.

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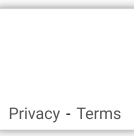
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FEATURED, LOCAL NEWS, TOP STORY

APPLE FIRE UPDATE: EVACUATION WARNINGS LOCALLY IN MORONGO VALLEY, PIONEERTOWN, AND RIMROCK

AUGUST 7, 2020 | Z107.7 NEWS | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Firefighters made good progress Thursday in fighting the Apple fire that started a week ago in the Oak Glen area. The fire is now over 28,000 acres with 30 percent containment as of Thursday night.





Cal Fire photo

Unified Fire Command said the smoke in the area was due to heavy fuels burning on the top of Yucaipa Ridge, but the flames are headed toward a rocky area with less available fuel. The fire also burned through heavy fuel in the Millard Canyon area, but it stayed on the western slopes of the canyon.

Planes and helicopters built a line of fire retardant today with the goal of preventing the flames to move into the communities of Morongo Valley and Pioneertown. The fire has stayed in place in the

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San Gorgonio Wilderness to the north. However, an evacuation warning was issued for Morongo Valley Thursday afternoon, and the evacuation warning in Riverside County was expanded to include the area east of Whitewater, north of Interstate 10, west of Highway 62, and south of the San Bernardino County line. The fire is still about 8 to 10 miles from Morongo Valley. This evacuation warning is voluntary. Residents who are elderly or invalid, or who have large animals or livestock, are encouraged to evacuate, but evacuation is not mandatory at this time. Residents who live in Morongo Valley, Pioneertown, or Rimrock are urged to formalize a plan of what they will take with them if they must evacuate and where they will go. It's also recommended that residents prep their homes and properties in case a fire comes through. See Morongo Basin Broadcasting Facebook page, or the z1077fm.com website for specific instructions.



Ground crews continued to build line in the area of Pine Bench and made good progress on the western perimeter east of Oak Glen. Cal Fire photo

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https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/dispute-over-wearing-face-mask-leads-to-alleged-assault-and-wild-pursuit/article_a0a716da-d7fd-11ea-8524-d3a2461247b1.html

FEATURED

Dispute over wearing face mask leads to alleged assault and wild pursuit

Aug 6, 2020



The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department reported that an altercation over wearing a face mask at a store escalated to an alleged assault with a deadly weapon and a wild pursuit in Rancho Cucamonga on Aug. 4.

An altercation over wearing a face mask at a store escalated to an alleged assault with a deadly weapon and a wild pursuit in Rancho Cucamonga, and a suspect was arrested, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.



On Aug. 4 at 1:03 p.m., deputies from the Rancho Cucamonga Station were dispatched to the ARCO Gas Station in the 12200 block of Highland Avenue regarding a disagreement between the victim (the store manager) and a customer, later identified as Scott Thomas, a 39-year-old Montclair resident.

Employees at the gas station reported that Thomas was upset because he was refused service for not wearing a mask properly inside the store and allegedly threw a display rack at the victim.

The dispute between the two escalated outside the store when the victim stood behind Thomas' truck in an attempt to get a picture of the license plate. Thomas put his truck in reverse and accelerated. The victim didn't have time to get out of the way, so he jumped on the trailer hitch and held on to the tail gate. Thomas sped out of the parking lot with the victim holding on to the tail gate.

The victim jumped inside the bed of the truck for safety because Thomas would not slow down enough for him to jump off safely, the Sheriff's Department said.

Thomas drove erratically for about a mile, accelerating and slamming on his brakes several times, before he pulled over, grabbed the victim and threw him to the ground, the Sheriff's Department said.

Deputies conducted an area check and found the victim near Vintage Avenue and Rochester Avenue.

Deputies also located Thomas in his truck and attempted a traffic stop. Thomas allegedly failed to yield and continued to drive to his girlfriend's house nearby, where he was taken into custody, the Sheriff's Department said.

Thomas was booked in at West Valley Detention Center, where he remained in custody on \$50,000 bail.

Medical aid responded and the victim was treated at the scene for minor injuries and released.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is urged to contact the Rancho Cucamonga Sheriff's Station. Callers wishing to remain anonymous can call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463) or leave information at www.wetip.com.



https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fontana-a-b-miller-high-school-no-longer-has-rebel-image/article_d45b5470-d82d-11ea-a4ff-b3426910b070.html

Fontana A.B. Miller High School no longer has 'Rebel' image

By RUSSELL INGOLD

Aug 6, 2020



The imagery of a "Rebel" could formerly be seen on the Fontana A.B. Miller High School campus, but now a large "M" has replaced it.

As the new school year gets underway this month, the image of the Fontana A.B. Miller High School "Rebel" is being reduced to rubble.

The Fontana Unified School District, responding to an online petition posted on change.org, has decided to cast aside the imagery associated with Miller's mascot -- a man with a giant mustache and hat -- because of its ties to the Confederacy.

For now, a large letter "M" will be the school's symbol.



Dustin Saxton, the Miller principal, said earlier this summer that the school administration has opted to remove all images of the mascot and the phrase "Rebel Nation" from not only the campus, but anywhere else it may be seen either online or in person.

"We have also removed images of the mascot from our website and social media pages and are in the process of reviewing potential replacements to this imagery to be discussed further with our students and staff to ensure a mascot is selected that better represents who we are at A.B. Miller High School," Saxton said in an online message.

"We realize that this process may take some time as we transition to either a new mascot image or an entirely new mascot, but know that we are working hard to make it happen."

In many parts of the country, a movement to rid public places of symbols of the Confederacy has gained traction, particularly among people who are advocating for racial justice in the wake of the death of Minnesota resident George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in May.

In her petition opposing the mascot, Adrienne Albert said that Miller's Rebel is "racist."

"When the school opened almost 30 years ago, the student body voted on what their school mascot would be, I know that many voted for the Rebel because they saw him as a sign of being rebellious, and in fact had no knowledge of what they were actually voting for," Albert wrote.

She said Miller's mascot was identical to the one used by the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and recently UNLV decided to remove its Rebel statue from its campus, which inspired Albert to urge the FUSD to take similar action.

Albert referred to a change.org petition by David Morris which was instrumental in influencing UNLV's leaders. Morris wrote:

"UNLV's current mascot, the 'Rebel' is racist and is rooted in a Confederate mythology which has no place on our campus. The mascot, originally named 'Beauregard' after the Confederate general who fired the first shots of the Civil War, presents a public image that runs counter to our core values and UNLV's mission to become the leading multicultural university in the United States. Having a mascot that is inextricably connected to a failed regime whose single aim was to preserve the institution of slavery is an embarrassment to our campus and to our community."



Albert, whose petition received support from nearly 1,200 people, said: "It is time for us to have a mascot that truly represents us all!"

Two people commented on her petition and said they agreed with her.

Dani Andrade said: "Yes, it's time that the school becomes more representative of its diverse and hardworking student body population."

"This mascot does NOT reflect the students and teachers at A.B. Miller. Get rid of it," Denise Key said.

Later, Albert said she was pleased to learn that the school and district had responded positively to her request.

"Thank you for helping to initiate this change!" she said.





NEWS CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY • News

San Bernardino DMV to reopen Monday after repairs made due to May 31 protest





Servpro employees clean up the DMV entrance on North Waterman Avenue on Monday, June 1. (Photo by Milka Soko, Contributing Photographer)

By **NATHANIEL PERCY** | npercy@scng.com | Daily Breeze

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 12:45 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 12:53 p.m.



After months of repairs because of fire damage and vandalism during a protest against police brutality, the Department of Motor Vehicles' San Bernardino office will reopen on Monday, Aug. 10.

The office, at 1310 N. Waterman Ave., will reopen 8 a.m., offering services to those with appointments, followed by walk-in customers as time and space allow, DMV officials said Thursday.

DMV officials continue to encourage customers to use the agency's online services when possible, especially during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The office closed March 27 because of the pandemic and was set to reopen with all of the other DMV offices in the state on June 11. But that was delayed because of the May 31 protest against police

brutality. Rioters broke glass doors and set a fire inside the office.

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LOCAL NEWS • News

San Bernardino raises marijuana store limit from 10 to 11

City leaders this summer proposed increasing the number of permits with a retail use from 10 to 17



By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun
PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 2:43 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 11:38 p.m.



San Bernardino will increase the cap on commercial cannabis retailers that can operate in town, but only from 10 to 11, not to 17 as leaders previously proposed.

After agreeing to nearly double the threshold for such businesses two months ago, a majority of council members on Wednesday, Aug. 5, opted to wait on significantly increasing the number of permits, at least until they receive data showing there is a local market for recreational cannabis.

While they reversed course on how many retailers they would allow to seek a permit, policymakers this week still removed caps on all viable manufacturing, distribution, cultivation and testing businesses, as well as microbusinesses that do not include retail as one of their uses.

Council members Theodore Sanchez, Sandra Ibarra, Fred Shorett, Henry Nickel and Jim Mulvihill voted for the new policies. Council members Juan Figueroa and Bessine Richard dissented.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



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“We shouldn’t make any decision without being backed by solid data,” Mulvihill said before the vote. “We say it’s not working, but we haven’t allowed it to work yet. We limited (permits) to see if they could be successful, and we don’t know that yet.

“We need to have the data. We don’t know what demand is.”

In June, city leaders learned that of the 16 applicants they allowed to pursue commercial cannabis licenses in February 2019 under Measure X, the voter-approved ballot measure reaffirming the council’s decision to welcome a certain number of marijuana businesses to town, only two – a distributor and a retailer – have opened.

The 14 other prospective businesses were at various points in the permitting process.

RELATED LINKS

That evening, Nickel proposed increasing the cap on cannabis retailers to 17, or one for every 12,500 residents, to stimulate the industry, generate revenue and ultimately, stomp out the black market.

San Bernardino to increase cap on commercial cannabis business licenses

Pay-to-play, political favoritism allegations persist in San Bernardino's cannabis license approval process

California's 'cannabis landlord,' targeted in police raid, alleges San Bernardino 'pay-for-play' corruption

This is how many commercial cannabis licenses San Bernardino approved

San Bernardino adopts new marijuana regulations

On Wednesday, Mulvihill worried that greenlighting too many cannabis storefronts too quickly would saturate the market and produce diminishing returns.

“If these places fail, they will not fade away,” he said, “and we’ll have a bunch of failing shops blighting in residential neighborhoods. Whose district wants a failing pot shop?”

“Let’s not lead people on. What if the data shows the market simply does not provide enough for everyone?”

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Brian Whitehead | Reporter



Twentynine Palms City Hall

< City will match county COVID grants to 29 Palms businesses

Aug 06, 2020 8:41 AM

TWENTYNINE PALMS — The city of Twentynine Palms has \$150,000 to match San Bernardino County COVID-Compliant Business Partner Grants.

Using state money obtained through the federal CARES Act, the city will be offering \$150,000 in small-business grants to businesses that comply with state and county health orders and protocols.



News

People with medical conditions, livestock owners advised to leave Morongo Valley now



Operations branch director Alex McBath goes over the map of the Apple Fire for a meeting in Pioneertown Thursday.

The city will offer businesses that are enrolled in the county program an additional \$2,500.

Businesses that meet the small-business requirements for the program collect up to \$2,500 in funding from the county of San Bernardino to offset costs directly related to complying with COVID protocols for business. They will gain exclusive access to personal protective equipment paid for by the county, and will get a COVID-compliant certificate that recognizes the business for its commitment to public health and safety.

The city encourages businesses to display those certificates for public view.

If your business has already been approved in the county's COVID-Compliant Business Partner Program, no additional applications will be required to secure this funding from the city of Twentynine Palms.

The application deadline has been extended to Oct. 31, but officials urge businesses to apply now as money is distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Businesses not yet enrolled in the program should apply today through the county's website:
<https://sbcovid19.com/covid-compliant-business-partnership-program>.

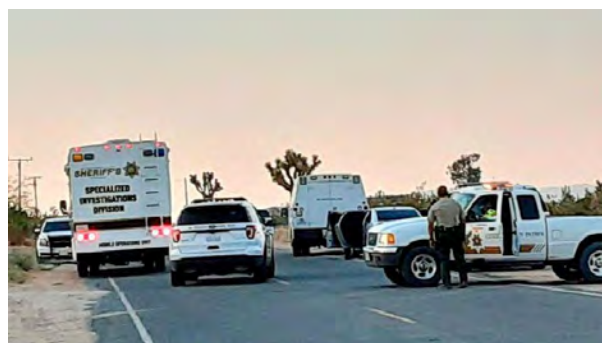
The only step to get the additional money from the city is completing a W-9 form to process a check. Visit <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>. W-9s can be submitted to the City of Twentynine Palms, Attn: Cindy Keniry, Assistant Finance Director, by email at ckeniry@29palms.org or fax at (760) 367-3138.

Apple Fire: Firefighters make progress, but warn locals to say ready



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Firefighters make a stand to keep Apple Fire from nearing Morongo Basin: Updated



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Update: Woman injured and arrested in deputy shooting on Avalon



News

Pioneertown and Rimrock told to be ready to evacuate for Apple Fire

To learn more about eligibility for the COVID-Compliant Business Partner Program, email sbcovidbusiness@eda.sbcounty.gov or call (909)387-3911.

For more information on city funding, call City Hall at (760) 367-6799.

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LOCAL NEWS • News

How Riverside and San Bernardino counties are spending coronavirus dollars



By **RYAN HAGEN** | rhagen@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 7:11 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 7:12 p.m.



By San Bernardino County’s calculations, loans to small businesses suffering the effects of the coronavirus pandemic have saved 94,821 jobs.

That’s thanks to more than \$590 million worth of loans to 16,133 businesses as of Thursday, Aug. 6, county spokesman David Wert said.

While direct assistance to businesses isn’t the only help coming to Inland Empire businesses, it’s the most impactful, said Mike Gallo, a member of the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board.

“Payroll protection was critical, new funding for training in pandemic-proof jobs was critical as well,” Gallo said. “Overall, the small business assistance is what keeps people alive. They say, ‘They’re shutting us down. How else can we survive?’”



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The paycheck protection program provides gives 100% federally guaranteed loans to employers who maintain their payroll during the pandemic.

Thanks to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security — or CARES — Act, San Bernardino County officials are budgeted for \$403 million in coronavirus relief, while Riverside County allocated \$431 million.

Additional money could come from one of several bills being debated in Washington D.C.

Gallo saw the effect of the loans firsthand at his own business.

As president and CEO of Kelly Space & Technology, Gallo was calculating how many of his employees he'd have to lay off or put onto partial unemployment when he heard his application for coronavirus help had been received.

“We had people working from home — we provided them machines to do test work and graphics while socially distancing — and we implemented other procedures to keep everyone safe,” he said. “But we still wouldn’t have been able to keep everyone that now we can.”

That’s thanks to \$150,000 in CARES Act funding.

In Riverside County, the help for small businesses has been equally critical in a staggering economy, said Paul Granillo, president and CEO of the Inland Empire Economic Partnership.

“For small businesses and restaurants, this was the difference between shutting down or being able to keep your employees,” Granillo said. “It saved a lot of restaurants, but other businesses, too — there were dentists who couldn’t see patients, so there was no income, and this kept them afloat.”

Granillo sits on Riverside County’s Economic Recovery Task Force, which aims to keep the local economy alive as businesses are forced to shut down or slow their operations to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

Riverside County has given grants totaling \$7,380,000 to 738 businesses, according to a report given to the county Board of Supervisors.

A July report to the Board of Supervisors fine-tuned the plan that Riverside County had discussed in May:

- **\$50 million:** Small business assistance. In the first round of grant applications, 1,611 businesses in Riverside County applied for loans of up to \$10,000, and 738 businesses received grants for a total \$7,380,00.

RELATED LINKS

[Riverside County small business coronavirus help expanded](#)

[How Riverside County plans to spend \\$431M in coronavirus dollars](#)

[\\$78M in coronavirus aid coming for Riverside County renters, small businesses](#)

Businesses can apply for a second round until Aug. 31 at www.rivcobizhelp.org.

San Bernardino County reports 398 more coronavirus cases, 3 new deaths

- **\$310 million:** Government response and preparation. The biggest share of Riverside County's funding — \$310 million — was budgeted for use on the pandemic itself, including Public Health's monitoring of the situation and enforcing regulations. The category includes medical supplies, contract tracing, testing, temporary public medical facilities and county employees' time.
- **\$100 million:** Congregate-care facilities. Riverside County plans to spend \$100 million on skilled-nursing facilities, assisted living, jails and other congregate facilities. That includes training, testing, disinfecting, quarantining and providing personal protective equipment.
- **\$55 million:** Homelessness/Rental Assistance. Help for 2,593 people who are behind on their rent by an average of \$1,923 each will cost an estimated \$5 million, according to a county report. Of those who applied, 49% said they were out of work because of COVID-19. Other portions of the funding will be used for nonprofits, homeless and domestic violence shelters, distance learning and job training focused on distance learning formats.
- **\$34 million:** Regional Health Care System Response. The county will reimburse hospitals for pandemic expenses and prepare for future COVID-19 response.

Riverside County reports 764 new coronavirus cases, 18 more deaths

San Bernardino County allocated \$403 million in April, with \$380 million of that going to the coronavirus relief fund. Other allocations include:

- **\$245,000:** Airports CARES Act Grant In Aid – Airports
- **\$542,380:** Centers Grant Program (Arrowhead Regional Medical Center)
- **\$3.7 million:** Health Reimbursement (ARMC)
- **\$4.3 million:** Community Development Fund
- **\$2.2 million:** Homeless Assistance Grant
- **\$3,75 million:** Aging and Disability Services Programs
- **\$3.5 million:** Public Health and Social Services
- **\$204,000:** law enforcement assistance
- **\$300,000:** Museum
- **\$133,000:** Public Health and Social Services

Sections



Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

ICE deliberately limited testing at Bakersfield immigration facility with COVID-19 outbreak



Hunger strikers at Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center in Bakersfield captured by drone during a sit-in protest on April 10. (California Committee for Immigrant Liberation)

By [ANDREA CASTILLO](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 6, 2020 | 3:50 PM

Last month, as the coronavirus spread through federal immigration detention centers around the country, officials at the Mesa Verde facility in Bakersfield rejected a suggestion to test all detainees there because it would be difficult to quarantine those who tested positive, the officials said.

[In an email on July 6](#), Janese Mull, the acting field office director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement in San Francisco, said lawyers for ICE had advised that it was in the facility's best interest to look into conducting COVID-19 testing for all detainees.

But Brooke Sanchez Othon, a clinical operations specialist at Wellpath, a private Nashville-based healthcare company that provides services to ICE detention facilities, pushed back against Mull's direction. The proposal to test all detainees, Sanchez Othon wrote, already had been denied "due to the housing restrictions we face."

"Testing all detainees will potentially cause the same housing issue we had last week but on a larger scale," Sanchez Othon continued, referring to the problem of quarantining infected detainees. "Completing the testing is not the issue it is just what we will need to do with the results once they are received."

The email exchange, obtained by lawyers with the American Civil Liberties Union and the public defender's office of San Francisco, reveals how ICE has failed to contain the spread of the coronavirus in its facilities, critics of the agency contend.

This week, a COVID-19 outbreak emerged at the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center, where about 120 detainees are being held. So far, 14 staff members and nine detainees have tested positive.

Detainees and immigrant rights advocates described a chaotic situation there, with two men hospitalized since Saturday and several more displaying symptoms of the virus while being held in large dormitories with others who feared becoming infected. As test results trickled in, the staff ran out of quarantine spaces, at one point reportedly placing two men in a bathroom for hours.

Spokespeople for ICE and GEO declined to comment because of pending litigation.

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On Thursday, a federal judge in San Francisco issued a searing ruling, saying that ICE has “responded to the health crisis in such a cavalier fashion” that it has “lost the right to be trusted.”

“The documentary evidence shows that the defendants have avoided widespread testing of staff and detainees at the facility, not for lack of tests, but for fear that positive test results would require them to implement safety measures that they apparently felt were not worth the trouble,” Judge Vincent Chhabria wrote in granting the temporary restraining order.

Chhabria ordered officials to administer weekly rapid COVID-19 tests to all detainees at the facility and not take in new detainees.

Emails and other documents obtained by the lawyers, who sued the federal government in April over conditions at the facility amid the pandemic, provide a rare behind-the-scenes look at conditions in the facility and ICE’s response to the novel coronavirus.

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Mesa Verde has four dorms, each outfitted with enough bunk beds for 100 people. The facility has three disciplinary segregation rooms, two medical segregation rooms and three intake rooms, which don’t have beds. Before the outbreak last week, detainees alternated top and bottom bunk sleeping assignments, with one person per bed.

Detainees in dorm B demanded to be tested for days before facility staff supplied tests late last month, advocates and detainees said. In an email sent Wednesday, an attorney for the federal government said that 78 detainees in the remaining three dormitories at Mesa Verde were tested and seven others refused testing. Detainees from dorm B were moved into dorm C so that dorm B could be designated for those who test positive.

In a May 18 memo, Nathan Allen, the warden at Mesa Verde, laid out a COVID-19 testing plan. Testing would begin two days later, and detainees who refused to be tested would be held together in a dorm for 14 days. Those who tested positive would be moved to medical isolation areas or a general population living area, depending on the number of people.

“Any detainee who tests positive will be quarantined appropriately according to CDC guidelines,” he wrote.

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But that plan was not executed, documents show.

Three days later, the San Francisco assistant field office director, Alexander Pham, wrote in notes from a conference call that, because of constraints that the ICE Health Service Corps guidelines would put on housing resources, “we will be limiting the scope of testing as much as possible.”

Further correspondence makes clear ICE and GEO Group’s indifference to testing, and their inability to agree on a consistent strategy, advocates said.

Another heated exchange began May 21 when Wendy Baca, the acting health service administrator for Mesa Verde, addressed by email concerns that she had with the warden’s plan for testing “street arrests” — those brought to the facility after being arrested by ICE rather than being transferred in.

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Baca said that testing those detainees immediately and then releasing them to the facility’s general population right after they test negative “will not ensure COVID-19 does not make it into the facility. This is due to the incubation period (generally 14 days) needed to trigger a positive COVID-19 test result.”

Erik Bonnar, the deputy field office director for ICE in San Francisco, replied by email bluntly: “It appears GEO has no interest in conducting asymptomatic testing AND the test kits GEO secured are not the IHSC [ICE Health Service Corps] recommended type. You can’t make this ... up.”

On [May 26](#), the warden, Allen, wrote that the acting field office director “would rather not have staff testing” because it would affect Enforcement and Removal Operations, the arm of ICE that handles deportations.

A month later, an executive with the GEO Group, the private prison company that manages the facility, [scolded Allen](#), saying that his testing plan fell short of identifying mitigating strategies for incoming detainees who don’t consent to being tested but are

placed directly into a housing unit anyway.

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“We cannot just throw up our hands and say there isn’t anything we can do,” said Paul Laird, GEO’s western region vice president. “We should at minimum identify specific areas within the unit for new arrivals. Maybe it is in a row of bunks in the front, maybe in the back etc, but we can’t just scatter them throughout the unit without any controls.

“Whether it be tape on the floor, privacy curtains, or any other strategy you can identify, it would be better than just saying we are unable to do anything.”

On April 29, Chhabria ordered ICE to produce a list of detainees at serious risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 for consideration for release. Nearly 130 detainees have been ordered released by Chhabria since then. Others have been released voluntarily by ICE or on bond.

But at the same time, ICE continued bringing new detainees into the facility — about 175 since early May, lawyers said.

Detainees have been left to wonder how the outbreak began, speculating that it could have been either through staff or recent arrivals.

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The first Mesa Verde staffer to test positive, on June 17, was a nurse. The first detainee tested positive at intake and remained quarantined before entering the general population on July 1.

But the virus didn’t spread until four weeks later, on July 30, when 65-year-old Yao Saetern tested positive. He was taken to a local hospital the next day and released to his family on Monday.

Some detainees arrived from prisons with coronavirus outbreaks. One detainee who was transferred from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, where more than 150 inmates have COVID-19, said that he was tested only after he requested a test. Another detainee who was transferred July 28 from Avenal State Prison, where the virus has killed two inmates, said his temperature was taken when he arrived but he wasn’t tested.

When German Najera Grajeda was transferred to Mesa Verde April 9 from the

Growlersberg Conservation Camp northeast of Sacramento, he did not receive a coronavirus test.

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Najera developed nausea and body aches early last week. The 33-year-old, who suffers from asthma, said he immediately requested a coronavirus test but was told that it wasn't necessary.

He received one days later. By Monday, he was taken to medical, where a nurse told him he had COVID-19.

Najera said she told him not to tell anyone "so they wouldn't be alarmed" and sent him back to the dorm. An hour later, they moved him to a disciplinary segregation room.

That night, he fainted and woke up in the hospital, where he was placed on oxygen and had a seizure before being discharged and taken back to Mesa Verde.

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"They haven't treated me like a human being," Najera said. "They're viewing this illness as if it's not serious. They don't fear it."

He said things started to improve Wednesday, under pressure from lawyers. Finally, nurses began checking his temperature three times a day instead of one.

Susan Beaty, a fellow at Centro Legal de la Raza in Oakland, was one of 14 people [arrested July 27](#) at the home of California Gov. Gavin Newsom while demanding that he halt transfers from prisons to detention facilities.

"We were there because clients and community members had been telling us for six months that the transfers are going to fuel the outbreak," Beaty said. "A week later, here we are."

[CALIFORNIA](#) [IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER](#)

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NEWS • News

Woman allegedly made death threats against Upland mayor, police chief

A restraining order was issued requiring the suspect to stay 100 yards away from City Hall, Upland Police Department



By **STEVE SCAUZILLO** | sscauzillo@scng.com | San Gabriel Valley Tribune

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 5:14 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.



A 54-year-old Upland woman was arrested after police found writings in her home threatening to kill Mayor Debbie Stone and Police Chief Darren Goodman, police officials said Thursday.

A restraining order has been issued by Superior Court Judge Thomas Garza requiring that Eurydice Candida Princeturk keep 100 yards away from the two city officials' residences, as well as 100 yards from Upland City Hall and the Upland Police Department.

During a search warrant conducted on Tuesday, Aug. 4, at Princeturk's townhome, in the 1200 block of Crestlane Circle, police detectives found "written threats directed at them (Stone and Goodman)," Upland police Capt. Cliff Mathews said on Thursday.

Both Goodman and Stone had no contact with the suspect.



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Upland police searched the suspect's home on Tuesday at around 2:26 p.m. after she was seen wielding a 13-inch kitchen knife and yelling obscenities at the front door of a neighbor in the vicinity of 13th Street and Mountain Avenue, police reported.

Police arrested Princeturk. She was charged with stalking with the intent of causing fear for one's life, and threatening bodily injury or death. In the course of the investigation Upland police learned of the death threats, according to police.

Mathews said the arrest and the two charges stem from the incident with the neighbor, who is not a city employee.

The protective orders were issued as a result of the death threats, he said. Upland police have submitted a complaint to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office to review the written threats and consider additional charges, Mathews said.

Upland PD noted that there had been “previous communications” from the suspect to the city. “But I am unaware of any threats to a city official before this one,” Mathews said.

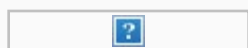
Princeturk was being held at the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga with bail set at \$150,000, according to documents. As of Thursday afternoon, she was still in custody, sheriff’s Sgt. Mauricio Hurtado said.

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NEWS CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY • News

CHP officer fatally shoots suspect in Ontario



By **BRIAN ROKOS** | brokos@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 6:39 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 7:02 p.m.



A California Highway Patrol officer shot a suspect to death Thursday afternoon, Aug. 6, the Ontario Police Department said.

Few details were immediately available. Cpl. Eric Quinones said he did not know the circumstances that led to the shooting.

No officers were injured, Quinones said. Ontario police are investigating the shooting because it happened in that city.

Police announced the shooting at about 5:35 p.m. in a Twitter message.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



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CHP officer fatally shoots suspect in Ontario. [READ MORE](#)

The investigation is taking place near the intersection of Haven Avenue and Guasti Road. Haven is closed between Jurupa Street and Guasti.

A CHP spokesperson could not immediately be reached for comment.

Swim coach arrested after missing Apple Valley teenager found alive in his home

By **Martin Estacio**

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 6, 2020 at 5:16 PM

A swim coach stands accused of child abduction after a teenage girl who had been missing for almost two weeks was found in his San Bernardino home.

John Casillas, 31, was arrested Wednesday after detectives served a search warrant and found the 16-year-old Apple Valley girl hiding in Casillas' bedroom, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

He was taken into custody at a local country club where he taught swim lessons and was later booked at the West Valley Detention Center in lieu of \$50,000 bail.

Inmate records show Casillas posted bail and was released Thursday morning. Formal charges had not been filed as of Thursday, and a court had not been scheduled.

A Sheriff's statement only identified the victim as a 16-year-old girl. Ismael Meza, father of Lexis Meza, confirmed with the Daily Press that the girl found was his daughter, who is a longtime swimmer.

The Apple Valley teenager had been missing since July 22. Ismael Meza said the family hired a private investigator and posted a \$3,000 reward for her safe return.

"Our daughter has a lifetime of recovery and Mr. Casillas is out to coach again?", he said. "We look forward to giving her all the support she needs."

Sheriff's officials said during the investigation of her whereabouts, detectives found that Lexis Meza "had been communicating with (Casillas), her former swim coach."

“John is employed as a swim instructor at several different swimming academies and has contact with many juveniles in the course of his employment,” the Sheriff’s Department said.

Ismael Meza said Casillas coached his daughter for “a little bit over a year” at the swim club, Desert Aquatics.

Authorities said Casillas knew of the girl’s age and the ongoing search for her.

Casillas’ father, 62-year-old Alfonso Casillas, was at the home when Lexis Meza was discovered.

The Sheriff’s Department said detectives would submit their investigation to the District Attorney’s Office regarding criminal charges against Alfonso Casillas, who they say “knew the victim was a juvenile and did not alert law enforcement.”

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Gus Garcia at the Apple Valley Sheriff’s Station at 760-240-7400.

Callers can remain anonymous and dial the WeTip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or www.WeTip.com.

Martin Estacio may be reached at MEstacio@VVDailyPress.com or at 760-955-5358.

Follow him on Twitter [@DP_mestacio](https://twitter.com/DP_mestacio).



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City of Del Mar to launch face mask education and enforcement program

To keep Del Mar as a safe place for all to enjoy, on August 3 the City Council adopted an education and enforcement program that is set to begin next week.

The program will employ Sheriff's deputies to work partial shifts two days per week to patrol the beach, Seagrove and Powerhouse parks, Stratford Court, Camino del Mar, and other areas with high foot traffic.



Face covering requirements to be enforced are spelled out in State and County public health orders. As established by the State and County,

violations are prosecuted as misdemeanors and can be punishable with fines of up to \$1,000 and jail sentences of up to 90 days, as determined by a judge.

Throughout Del Mar, signage and communications of many varieties remind residents and visitors to wear a mask. Notwithstanding, the City continues to receive complaints that members of the public are ignoring public health orders that require face coverings when social distancing is not possible.

The work will be assigned to Sheriff's deputies — as opposed to parking enforcement officers, lifeguards or other City staff — because they are appropriately trained and equipped to handle enforcement of matters of this nature.

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Efforts will focus on education first, followed by enforcement.

The pilot program includes signs and a public information campaign.

[Open the face covering enforcement staff report \(PDF\)](#)

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CALIFORNIA

Orange County posts its highest single-day COVID death total: 32



Patrons dine under umbrellas and other portable shelters on Main Street in Huntington Beach on July 28. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

By [LUKE MONEY](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 6, 2020 | 3:18 PM

Orange County reported 32 new coronavirus deaths Thursday, a single-day high for the county.

The newly reported fatalities broke the previous one-day record — 31, set Saturday, according to [The Times' tracker](#) — and pushed the county's total COVID-19 deaths to 697.

Of the latest deaths, eight were residents of either skilled-nursing or assisted-living facilities, according to the Orange County Health Care Agency.

Overall, about 45% of the county's fatalities have been residents in such institutions.

Experts and health officials have said deaths are a lagging indicator of coronavirus spread and probably reflect exposures to the virus that occurred weeks earlier. Confirmed COVID-19 cases began rising sharply statewide [in late May](#), when California reopened many sectors of its economy.

CALIFORNIA

Coronavirus deaths rise in L.A., Orange County

Aug. 1, 2020

Orange County also announced 580 new COVID-19 cases Thursday, boosting its total to 38,711.

An estimated 28,109 people have recovered from the virus to date, health officials said.

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Investing in Clarity

By MAG

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According to the latest available data, 517 COVID-19 patients remain hospitalized countywide, with 171 of them in intensive care.

However, county officials noted that issues with the state's CalREDIE electronic system, which collects information from laboratories and feeds it to state and local health departments, "may result in a lower number of daily COVID positive cases received and tests reported."

CALIFORNIA

Serious breakdown in California systems causes inaccurate coronavirus numbers

Aug. 5, 2020

The [ongoing technical problems](#) affect the state's ability to track the spread of the virus, potentially resulting in significant undercounts of infections.

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Michelle Steel, chairwoman of the county Board of Supervisors, urged the state Thursday "to provide timely, transparent information on the status" of the system.

“Public health officials and policymakers across the state rely on this data to understand COVID spread and make decisions on opening and closing schools, businesses and gatherings,” she said during a news conference. “It is essential to know the extent of the problems with the CalREDIE system and understand how it is affecting the data we report.”

Tracking coronavirus in Orange County

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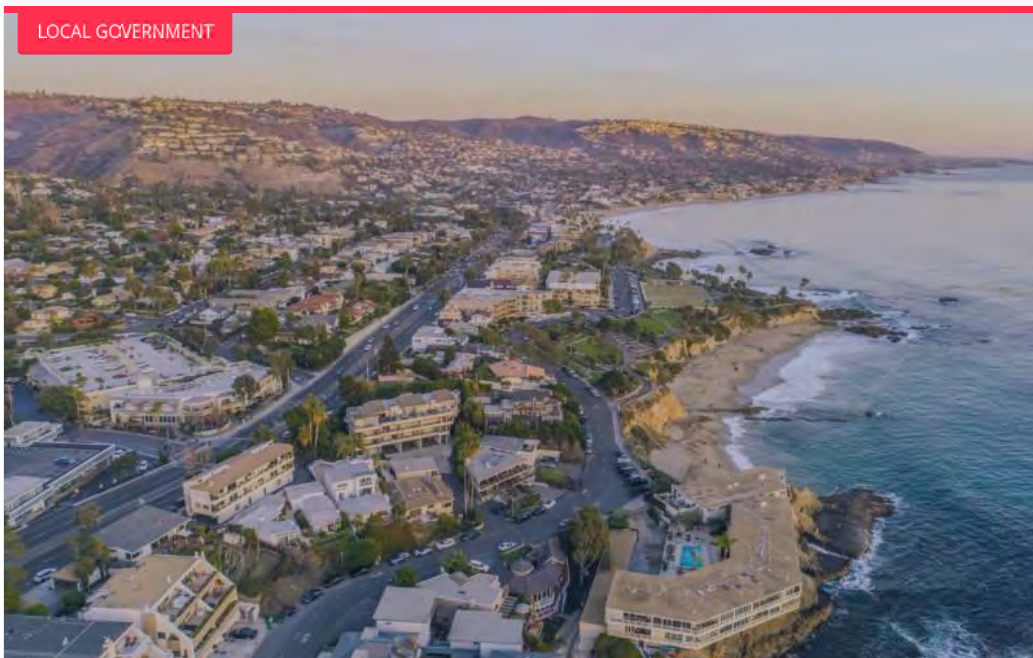
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Luke Money is a Metro reporter covering breaking news at the Los Angeles Times. He

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



County of Orange launches SafeDineOC COVID-safe restaurant campaign

The County of Orange today announced the launch of a new SafeDineOC COVID-Safe Restaurant Campaign to incentivize Orange County restaurants to follow California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



“Our restaurant owners across Orange County need help right now, and we need to take steps wherever possible to stop the spread of COVID-19,” said **Orange County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Michelle Steel, Second District**. “These grants give financial support to those owners to help cover costs that they are incurring to offer a safe, protected dining experience to their customers and workers.”

Restaurant owners may apply for a \$1,000 grant per Orange County restaurant location for taking steps to create a COVID-safe environment for their customers and employees. The grant will reimburse restaurants for purchases of personal protective equipment including face masks, cleaning products, employee training and costs for physical distancing of tables and chairs, as examples.

“Restaurants drive our local economy, create thousands of jobs and generate millions in local tax revenue,” said **Vice Chairman Andrew Do, First District**. “SafeDineOC is a product of a proposal I brought to the board in mid-July to increase COVID-19 restaurant safety compliance while also supporting small businesses that are keeping their employees and customers safe.”

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The SafeDineOC campaign is sponsored by the County of Orange and managed by Orange County Business Council (OCBC), which will handle intake and approval of all restaurant applications as well as disbursement of the \$1,000 grants to restaurant owners. Through its comprehensive database of restaurants, the OC Health Care Agency will ensure the promotion of the campaign to all restaurant owners in the County.

“SafeDineOC will assist restaurants with some funds to defray some of their extra expenses. It will also offer the public information on which restaurants in Orange County are participating in this program,” said **Supervisor Don Wagner, Third District**. “Consumers need to be given resources and the Orange County Business Council is helping ensure people are able to locate safe dining options in Orange County during this time.”

Restaurants that apply and are approved will be added to a list of COVID-safe eateries organized by city that will be available to consumers on the SafeDineOC website. This online resource will enable the public to see which restaurants offer a safe dining experience in Orange County.

“Orange County businesses are challenged at this time, especially our restaurants,” said **Fourth District Supervisor Doug Chaffee**. “We hope that the SafeDineOC program will provide relief not only to our restaurants but also to our residents who want to know where they can dine safely in Orange County at this time.”

The application form is in multiple languages and OCBC staff is available to answer questions. More information about the program may be found at www.safedineoc.com.

“Maintaining consumer confidence in the restaurant industry is critical to helping businesses stay afloat during these challenging times,” said **Supervisor Lisa Bartlett**. “When customers visit a restaurant, they want to be confident that it is clean and in compliance with County health and safety guidelines,” said Bartlett. “The safety and protection of restaurant workers, and the customers they serve, is paramount to stopping the spread of COVID-19,” she said.

Restaurants that apply for the program must meet all qualifications which will be verified by OCBC. Funds will be distributed within 45 days. All restaurants must submit receipts for CARES ACT-qualified purchases for final reimbursement grant payment on purchases made March 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020.

“We all want to visit OC restaurants and feel safe,” said **Orange County Business Council President Lucy Dunn**. “The Board of Supervisors created a great program to reward restaurants that follow health protocols for today’s outdoor dining as well as preparing for future dine-in service when the time comes. OCBC commends the Board of Supervisors for their response. Innovative ideas and solutions like SafeDineOC ensure Orange County will remain on a path toward both good health and economic recovery.”

For more information about SafeDineOC, go to www.safedineoc.com.

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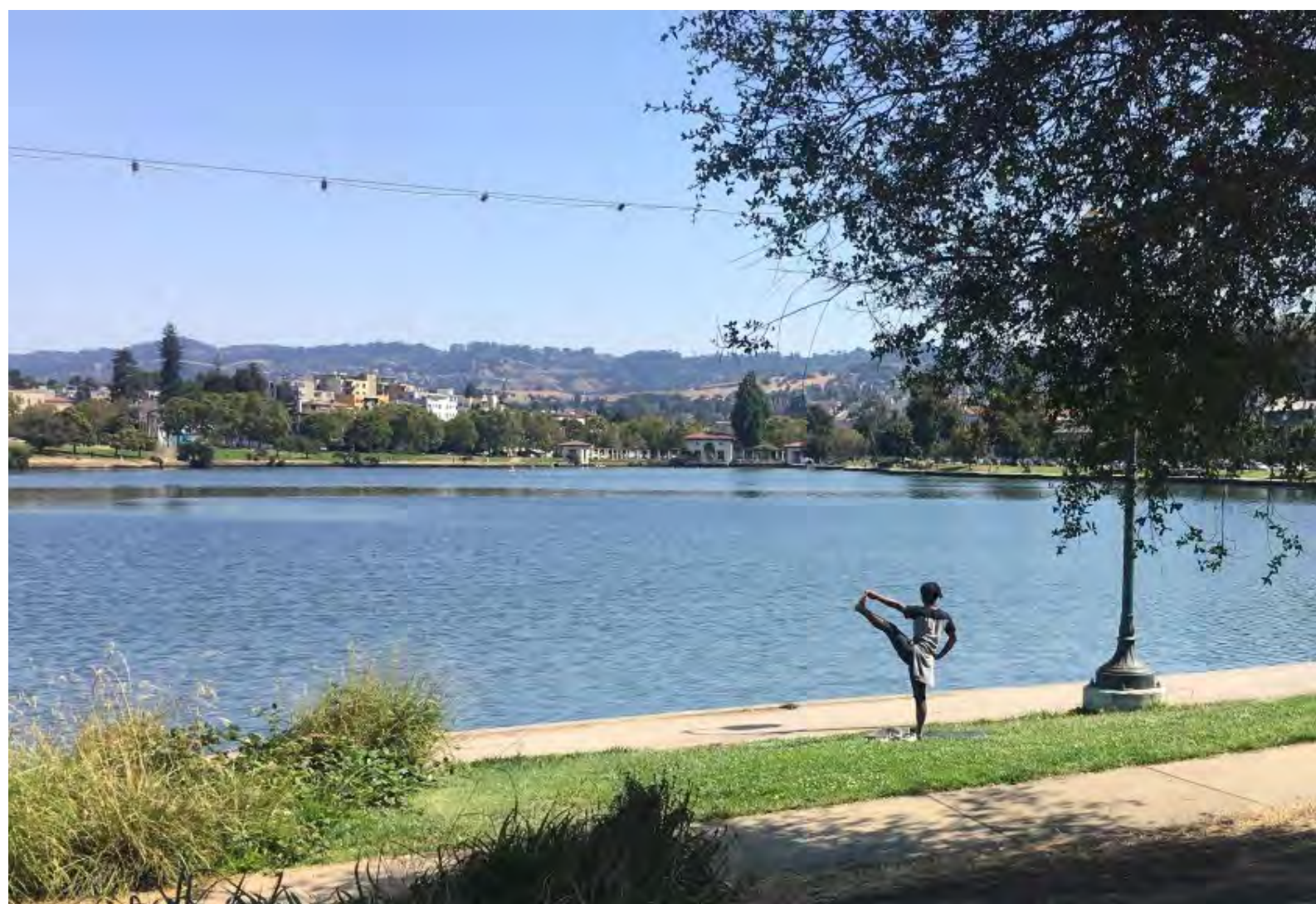
Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

To slow coronavirus, a California county might pay the sick to stay home



Oakland's Lake Merritt (Maura Dolan / Los Angeles Times)

By [RONG-GONG LIN II](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 7, 2020 | 8:19 AM

California officials are desperate to reduce the spread of coronavirus in the workplace, which has been one reason for a [surge in cases](#).

Could one solution be to pay people to stay home when they get sick?

A county in the San Francisco Bay Area is planning to offer stipends of \$1,250 for low-income residents to stay home if they have tested positive for COVID-19.

Alameda County, the Bay Area's second most populous county, plans to offer the payments to those who test positive, are not receiving unemployment or paid sick leave,

and are referred by designated clinics in high-risk neighborhoods.

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Aug. 6, 2020

"Many county residents who test positive for COVID-19, especially hourly workers, will need assistance in order to isolate, as they cannot afford the loss in wages," said a [staff report](#) prepared for the Board of Supervisors. "We expect many of these individuals in need of assistance will be part of the 'essential' workforce who are unable to work remotely and thus are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19."

The county authorized the pilot program to not exceed \$10 million.

Experts say getting infected people to stay home when sick is essential in controlling the

pandemic.

Some of the hardest hit neighborhoods in [Alameda County](#) include areas in East Oakland, where more than 2,400 cases have been recorded for every 100,000 residents in the ZIP Code 94601.

But in the nearby suburb of Alameda, case rates are far lower, where more than 250 cases have been recorded for every 100,000 residents in the ZIP Code 94501.

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Rong-Gong Lin II is a metro reporter, specializing in covering statewide earthquake safety issues. The Bay Area native is a graduate of UC Berkeley and started at the Los Angeles Times in 2004.

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CALIFORNIA

Ventura County sues church after indoor services without masks or distance



Pastor Rob McCoy, right, gives Communion at an April 5 Palm Sunday service at his Thousand Oaks church, Godspeak Calvary Chapel. (Carolyn Cole / Los Angeles Times)

By [JAKE SHERIDAN](#)

AUG. 6, 2020 | 8:34 PM

Worshippers at Godspeak Calvary Chapel in Thousand Oaks have been celebrating their faith for months in open violation of state and local health orders in place to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

“Singing, hugging, no masks,” Senior Pastor Rob McCoy said, describing the services.

Now the church and Ventura County are facing off in court. County officials sued McCoy and the church this week to shut down the large, indoor gatherings. The lawsuit follows the county Board of Supervisors’ vote to use court actions to enforce COVID-19 health orders.

The case on the temporary restraining order is set to be heard Friday morning.

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The county's suit says the church's actions "will cause and continue to cause great and irreparable injury to the general public ... including hospitalizations and deaths, which in turn is likely to result in continued and further restrictions on businesses and other operations and activities."

"It is only a matter of time — if it has not already happened — before there is a significant outbreak of COVID-19 cases among the attendees," wrote Dr. Robert Levin, a Ventura County public health officer listed as a plaintiff in the suit.

McCoy, whom the suit said has declared himself "willing to go to jail" and "willing for [authorities] to take [his] building" rather than comply with the health orders, said he's being unfairly targeted.

"We haven't had one case" of the coronavirus, he said. Court documents allege more than 200 people have attended the services.

McCoy's run-ins with coronavirus orders have lasted nearly as long as the pandemic. The former Thousand Oaks mayor [resigned his post as City Council member](#) on April 4 after Gov. Gavin Newsom declared churches nonessential. The next day, he violated the governor's orders, hosting socially distanced Communion inside his church for 10 people at a time.

Godspeak switched to livestreaming after Newsom shut down churches, McCoy said, but welcomed parishioners back inside without precautions after the governor supported the George Floyd protests against police violence and racism.

In July, county Public Health Director Rigoberto Vargas received a complaint about the

church's services and contacted McCoy. The pastor said he would continue to hold services, and Vargas saw no masks or social distancing when he watched the church's livestream the next Sunday.

"Instead, attendees were in close proximity to one another, seated side by side in pews, for the entirety of the service. The church appeared to be at capacity," Vargas wrote in a declaration set to be read in court Friday.

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Vargas reminded McCoy that outdoor or virtual services could be held. But McCoy said he won't hold outdoor services "because we have a church."

Even though Ventura County's health officials — along with officials at the state and federal level — continue to call on citizens to wear masks, not gather indoors and practice social distancing, McCoy said data and expert consultations informed his decision to hold services without precautions.

"We would be the first to be masked and distanced, and willingly so, if this were meriting it, and it doesn't. This isn't a health issue, it's an ideological issue," McCoy said.

Ventura County reported 533 new COVID-19 cases Monday. Nearly [8,000 people have tested positive](#) for the coronavirus in the county, which has a population near 850,000. Seventy-nine people have died because of COVID-19, and 79 more are hospitalized with the virus.

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McCoy said those numbers "aren't going to change" and are too low to justify "shuttering our schools and destroying our businesses."

Ahead of Friday's court proceedings, county Public Information Officer Ashley Bautista highlighted the potential danger of indoor gatherings.

"COVID-19 continues to spread from person to person and at gatherings. It is very important to follow the state's guidance, so that the most vulnerable in our community can be spared from the disease," Bautista said.

"Churches and other groups play a valuable role in the wellness of our county. We encourage people to stay connected, but to do so safely."

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Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

After first being spared, rural California now being ravaged by the coronavirus



Farmworkers weed a tomato field in French Camp, Calif., on July 24. The epidemic is moving from urban Latino populations to rural Latino

populations, one health expert said. (Max Whittaker / For The Times)

By [ALEX WIGGLESWORTH](#), [RONG-GONG LIN II](#)

AUG. 7, 2020 | 5 AM

SAN FRANCISCO — It was once said that California’s coronavirus pandemic was hitting dense urban areas the hardest.

Now, it’s rural, agricultural areas that are among the most severely affected.

“The epidemic is moving from urban Latino populations to rural Latino populations,” Dr. George Rutherford, epidemiologist and infectious-diseases expert at UC San Francisco, said Wednesday. The risk factors are the same: low-income essential workers who live in crowded housing and must leave home to work and earn money and who may be less likely to speak up to call attention to problematic workplace safety conditions.

Earlier in the pandemic, Los Angeles County was one of the hot spots for new infections. By June, it was Imperial County. The rural, agricultural and impoverished county east of San Diego soared up the list as California’s hardest hit county, in terms of new cases per 100,000 residents over the past two weeks. Imperial County hit its worst number on June 16, when there were 1,438 cases per 100,000 residents over the previous two weeks.

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Now, it’s clear that the virus is hitting the Central Valley the hardest. Kern County, home to

Bakersfield, is now recording 1,160 cases per 100,000 residents over the past two weeks. The rate reached its highest point on Saturday, reaching 1,376 cases per 100,000 residents over the prior two weeks — a figure more than 9 times as much as it was at the beginning of July, when the county reported 136 cases per 100,000 residents.

In other words, for the seven-day period that ended Sunday, Kern County reported 12,098 cases; just a month ago, the county was reporting only about 1,350 cases a week.

State officials recommend counties have a case rate of no more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents over the past two weeks. Case rates may be artificially lower due to [a glitch in the state's reporting system](#).

The Central Valley is among the areas of the nation that federal officials are particularly worried about. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious diseases expert, said the big problem is the uptick in the rate at which coronavirus tests are confirming infections.

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By Mazda

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The 14-day positive test rate climbed to 24% in Kern County on Monday, more than triple the state's average of 7% on that day.

"This is a predictor of trouble ahead," Fauci said on CNN Thursday. A high rate of tests confirming infections is "a clear indication that you are getting an uptick in cases, which inevitably — as we've seen in the Southern states — leads to surges, and then you get hospitalizations, and then you get deaths."

"Now is the time to accelerate the fundamental preventive measures ... masks, social distancing, avoiding crowds," Fauci said.

While California's second surge of coronavirus this summer is showing signs of stabilization, the levels of circulating virus in places like the Central Valley are a source of deep worry among physicians because of how much higher they are now.

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"Although L.A. may be looking a bit better, there's significant movement of virus from Bakersfield all the way up the Central Valley into Stockton," Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House's coronavirus response coordinator, said in a [recording of a conference call](#) obtained by the Center for Public Integrity.

Of the 10 California counties with the highest infection rates per capita over the past two weeks, eight were in the Central Valley as of Thursday, according to the [Los Angeles Times' California coronavirus tracker](#). Besides Kern County, they were Merced County (656 cases per 100,000 residents over the past two weeks); Kings (568); Colusa (545); Tulare (538); Fresno (497); Stanislaus (440); and Madera (437).

Imperial County also made the top 10 list, with a rate of 415 cases per 100,000 residents; as did San Bernardino County, with a rate of 397 cases per 100,000 residents.

Other rural areas are also seeing a rise in cases, such as the Salinas Valley in Monterey County and fields in Ventura County, Rutherford said.

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California's 11th hardest hit county by this measure is Mono County, home to Mammoth Mountain, a popular tourist destination, with a rate of 395 cases per 100,000 residents in the last two weeks. It's likely the disease followed Southern Californians traveling to the Eastern Sierra for the Fourth of July weekend, Rutherford said.

Los Angeles County is the 18th hardest hit California county by this measure, reporting 327 cases per 100,000 residents over the last two weeks.

Coronavirus case rates soar in California's Central Valley

The pandemic is no longer just an urban problem. Increasingly, the virus is spreading rapidly in rural parts of California, particularly the agricultural Central Valley.

Updated Aug. 6, 2020

[Times reporting](#)

Los Angeles Times

Gov. Gavin Newsom has identified the Central Valley as a region in great need of resources to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Five of the eight medical teams staffed by U.S. Department of Defense personnel and assigned to California have now been sent to the Central Valley, Newsom said; he also asked state lawmakers to approve \$52 million to improve testing, tracing and isolation protocols in an eight-county region of the Central Valley known as the San Joaquin Valley.

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The region needs it. Kern County reported its highest COVID-19 hospitalization numbers on record on Sunday, when 321 people with confirmed coronavirus infections were in its hospitals.

"We definitely are seeing more cases of coronavirus in our hospitals than we ever had,"

said Dr. Hemmal Kothary, chief medical officer of Dignity Health's Central California division. Kothary oversees Memorial Hospital and both campuses of Mercy Hospital Bakersfield, which together had 260 coronavirus patients as of 10 a.m. Monday.

He said the surge, which began about two weeks ago, has put a strain on resources. Dozens of staffers have also either fallen ill or tested positive for the virus over the past week, he said.

"At one point, we had over 50 nursing staff among the three hospitals that I cover who were out," he said.

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A National Guard medical team was dispatched to Memorial Hospital on Monday to help cover the staffing gaps, he said. The team had been stationed nearby at Adventist Health Bakersfield.

Local officials attribute the high case rate in part to an increase in testing. Some testing sites saw a sustained fourfold increase over the past several weeks, Michelle Corson, public relations officer for Kern County Public Health, said Friday in an email. That caused some labs to report supply shortages, which in turn delayed the turnaround time for test results, she said.

On Monday, an average of 24.4% of coronavirus tests over the preceding two weeks in Kern County were coming back positive, much higher than the statewide average of roughly 7%.

By Thursday, the rate was lower — down to 17.6% in Kern County, compared to a statewide positive test rate of 6.1%.

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Kothary believes the uptick could be in part linked to the Fourth of July holiday, when

many people held large gatherings.

Coronavirus cases statewide »

As of August 6, 9:56 p.m. Pacific

541,494
confirmed

10,028
deaths

Statewide deaths by day

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Gov. Newsom has rolled back reopenings. [What's closed or reopened in your county?](#)

As with other Central Valley communities, Kern County has also seen a familiar dynamic play out, he said: Black and Latino residents and low-wage workers are getting infected at higher rates.

"We definitely have a higher incidence in the Black and Latino communities," he said.

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"Kern County has two modes of income," he said. "It's agriculture, and it's the oil industry."

Workers in those industries tend to live and work in close quarters, many of them in multifamily households, he said. They are also less likely to be able to stay home when they're sick and more likely to lack protections to speak out about safety concerns at work.

"I think we're seeing a lot of that when we're doing these tracings back, that the whole family has been infected," he said.

Low-income residents are also less likely to have access to healthcare services and more likely to have preexisting health conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness or death from the virus, he said.

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Wigglesworth reported from Inglewood and Lin from San Francisco.

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Alex Wigglesworth is a staff writer at the Los Angeles Times.



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CALIFORNIA

'Broken' coronavirus tracking system leaves California in the dark: 'We have no idea'



Memorial Hospital nurse Angela Bilyeu flushes the IV of patient Pedro Cortez in a COVID-19 unit on Friday, July 24, 2020. Medical facilities in Kern County are being pushed to the limit as more and more people contract COVID-19. (Alex Horvath/Bakersfield Californian)

By [ANITA CHABRIA](#), [MAURA DOLAN](#)

AUG. 6, 2020 | 6:56 PM

SACRAMENTO — The breakdown in California’s coronavirus test reporting system is disrupting pandemic response efforts across the state, leaving local officials in the dark about the spread of COVID-19 and blocking the ability of counties to get restrictions lifted until the system is fixed.

State officials have not yet provided details on when fixes will be made to the electronic system, called CalREDIE, that reports coronavirus test results to the state’s disease registry system. California, as a result, lacks an accurate count of coronavirus infections, leading health officials to freeze the state’s watchlist, with no counties added or removed.

“CalREDIE has broken,” said Peter Beilenson, director of Sacramento County’s Department of Health Services. “The bottom line is we don’t know the real caseload.... We don’t know if

we are missing 250 cases [a day] or 50 cases," he said of his local numbers. "We have no idea."

The flawed picture has cast into serious doubt California's pandemic outlook. On Wednesday, the state counted 5,300 new coronavirus cases, down from a peak of nearly 13,000 reported about two weeks ago. But the steep drop relies on the underreported data, and health officials remain unsure about the actual caseloads.

The system snafus come amid mixed signs about the state of the pandemic. While some hospitalization rates are down, the state's death toll reached a grim milestone, topping 10,000 deaths. Orange County also reported its [single-day highest COVID-19 death toll](#) Thursday, adding 32 deaths for a total of 697. And White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx on Wednesday singled out California's Central Valley as a worrisome region.

The lack of reliable infection rate data has led many counties to add disclaimers on their public health websites saying the information is unreliable. The data is also not being published on the state's county data monitoring website, according to the California Department of Public Health. The state has not given a timetable for when the problem might be fixed.

The flawed data has not affected patient care or test results for individual patients, officials said.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, California Health and Human Services secretary, called the problem his department's "top priority" and said a team of dozens had been working "around the clock" to make fixes.

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"Having accurate data is critical for public confidence, contact tracing and hospital surge planning. We will not rest until this problem is resolved," Ghaly said in a statement. "All Californians and local public health officials must have accurate data, and we pledge to share a full accounting of when these problems began and their magnitude as soon as we

have a clear understanding — and the solutions to address them.”

The California Department of Public Health has directed all laboratories to report positive results directly to county health departments until the problem is resolved. Some county health departments are resorting to counting the testing results by hand to get accurate totals.

Local public health officials and experts are expressing growing frustration with the state’s response. Beilenson said state officials had not clarified how extensive the underreporting was or whether the missing data came from a single lab or multiple agencies. Some officials fear that weeks of data may be inaccurate.

UC San Francisco professor Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an expert in infectious diseases, said the inaccurate numbers potentially could affect federal aid because case numbers are examined before help is awarded. Low numbers, he said, could mean fewer federal resources.

“It’s a rationale that the feds can say, ‘Well maybe you don’t need this thing we have, or financial resources, because it doesn’t seem as bad,’” Chin-Hong said.

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But one of the most damaging fallouts of the missed data, he said, might be a decline in public trust. Case numbers are one of the measurements used to determine what can open in a county and when social restrictions can be lifted, and the public watches them closely.

“We always put faith in computers, data dumps, and I think having someone discover this glitch makes us wonder: What other glitches are there?” Chin-Hong said. “Data is power, and if data are unreliable, it just makes us feel a little bit queasy.”

The CalREDIE system is relied on by officials to determine infection rates and to decide which counties land on the watchlist, a category that restricts them from opening many indoor activities. School reopenings may also be hindered by the inaccurate numbers. The counties now on the list, including Los Angeles, account for most of the state’s population.

Counties must be off the list for 14 days before they can reopen certain businesses. The inaccurate numbers also may affect state waivers that could allow some private and parochial schools to open for in-person classes.

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Public health officials also rely on the system to trace contacts of infected people, and without accurate reports, the tracing cannot be done.

Los Angeles County Health Officer Dr. Muntu Davis said in a news conference Thursday that the glitch has produced an undercount of positive cases in the county. With new information from the laboratories, L.A. County health officials hope to have a more accurate count by next week.

"But it might take us some time," Davis said.

Barbara Ferrer, Los Angeles County's health director, has urged residents who test positive to alert county health officials so they can conduct a contact tracing interview and identify those who may have been exposed so they can avoid infecting others.

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"We are really worried about the fact that we're losing some cases, and that may in fact result in some small increases in transmission in the weeks ahead," she said.

In San Francisco, officials said the data problems are seriously affecting their ability to investigate new cases and trace contacts.

"The city will pause providing updated data on testing, cases, contact tracing metrics and associated key public health indicators until the statewide issue is resolved," San Francisco's COVID-19 Joint Information Center said Thursday.

Meanwhile, Alameda County, which has been hit hard by the pandemic, [has decided to offer \\$1,250](#) to as many as 7,500 COVID-19 sufferers so they can isolate. The county's supervisors unanimously approved the \$10-million pilot program on Tuesday, but when it will start is unclear. The money will go to infected residents who do not receive unemployment or sick leave benefits.

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Times staff writers Taryn Luna and Phil Willon contributed to this report.



BUSINESS

Coronavirus: California bill would make employers report exposures

Business groups fight bill, cite 'name and shame' provision





FREMONT – JUNE 15: Tesla employee Carlos Gabriel, right, speaks during a rally at the Tesla plant in Fremont, Calif., on Monday, June 15, 2020. (Randy Vazquez / Bay Area News Group)

By **ETHAN BARON** | ebaron@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 1:13 p.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 1:44 p.m.



A California bill supported by labor unions and opposed by business groups would force employers to quickly notify employees and health officials if a worker is exposed to coronavirus.

Under Assembly Bill 685, sponsored by The California Labor Federation and United Food and Commercial Workers, public or private employers would face fines up to \$10,000 for failing to provide notifications of exposure within 24 hours. Failure to provide any of the notifications would be a misdemeanor, under the bill authored by Eloise Gómez Reyes (D-San Bernardino) and promoted by Robert Rivas (D-Hollister) and Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego).

“As the average age of those falling ill from COVID-19 has become younger, it is critical to track workplace exposure and to use that data to find ways to keep workers safe on the job,” the bill says.

“With infections and deaths disproportionately high in the Latino, Black, and Asian-Pacific Islander communities, more information about workplace illness and industry clusters can inform policy makers in addressing healthcare disparities and protecting vulnerable workers.”

Existing law fails to make employers’ reporting requirements clear, the bill says.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



“This deficiency has led to workers and members of the public living in fear for their own safety, unaware of where outbreaks may already be occurring,” according to the bill. “It is imperative that positive COVID-19 tests or diagnoses be reported immediately in the occupational setting, to members of the public, and to relevant state agencies.”

If the bill passes, when a worker is exposed to coronavirus — through contact with someone who has tested positive, been diagnosed with the virus, quarantined under a COVID-19 order, or died because of confirmed or possible coronavirus infection — the employer must take a series of steps. All

employees at the worksite must be notified in writing, in English and the dominant language of the workplace, and the employer must “make every reasonable effort necessary to notify workers verbally,” the bill says.

Worker representatives would have to be notified, and along with workers, be told of any existing options for exposed employees to take leave, as well as disinfecting plans the employer intends to follow before reopening.

The employer would also have to tell state health and safety authorities how many workers, and in which jobs, have tested or been diagnosed positive, ordered to quarantine or died from possible coronavirus infection.

California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health and the State Department of Public Health would have to put reported information on its websites “in a manner that allows the public to track outbreaks, the number of COVID-19 cases reported by any workplace, and the occupation of employees involved.”

Business groups, including the California Chamber of Commerce are fighting the bill. “Its definition of ‘exposure’ is broad and vague, resulting in triggering ‘exposures’ in non-sensical scenarios,” a statement of opposition filed in the legislature says. “If an infected employee (or customer) briefly visits a workplace, wearing a mask, drops off an item, speaks briefly to a clerk who is 10 feet away behind a desk, then leaves is that an ‘exposure?’”

Although the groups said they agree that a positive COVID-19 test or diagnosis are appropriate grounds for a person to be considered potentially infectious, the threshold for worker exposure should not be met merely because a worker had contact with someone under a quarantine order or whose death “could have been” caused by the virus, the groups said.

“Employers should not face potential criminal penalties for failing to provide notice in ambiguous scenarios, particularly with a disease that we do not yet understand well and can be asymptomatic,” the groups said.

There is already coronavirus case recording done through California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health and through testing labs’ mandatory disclosures, the groups argued.

“AB 685 also includes a ‘name and shame’ provision by requiring state agencies to post on their websites company-specific coronavirus exposure information, the groups asserted. “In addition, publication poses potential privacy concerns, as reporting an individual’s ‘occupation’ and worksite may render the person identifiable. For example, a location may have only one or two managers or technicians.”

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Ethan Baron

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CALIFORNIA

Column: Facing a wave of evictions, California is about to make thousands of kids homeless



Ian Jameson, left, organized a gathering of tenant rights activists at El Monte City Hall to demand that the City Council pass a moratorium barring all evictions during the pandemic. (Jason Armond / Los Angeles Times)

By [ERIKA D. SMITH](#) | COLUMNIST

AUG. 7, 2020 | 5 AM

Things weren't great before COVID-19, but at least only about 570 families, hungry, broke and on the brink of homelessness, needed help from the volunteers at St. Joseph Center in Los Angeles.

Today, that number is about 860.

A month from now, it could be in the thousands — or even more.

California is rapidly approaching what has been dubbed the "eviction cliff," or the point where true protection from being evicted during the pandemic will fall away, at least for a short time. If that happens, as many as 1 million families across the state — some 365,000 in Los Angeles County alone — could find themselves at risk of being forced out of their homes, perhaps as soon as September.

By some estimates, tens of thousands — if not hundreds of thousands — of people with no jobs and no safety net to fall back on could become homeless.

“It would be on the order of a big earthquake on the San Andreas,” said retired law professor Gary Blasi, who [published a study on the topic in May](#) for the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy. “It’ll be a man-made version of San Andreas, except the buildings will still be standing. It’s just the people that will be on the street.”

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Eviction protections are expiring. What does this mean for struggling California tenants?

Aug. 7, 2020

Nationally, the catastrophe would be much the same. [Early estimates](#) by the Aspen Institute found that as many as 23 million Americans could be at risk of eviction by September. A new estimate puts the number closer to 40 million over the next several months.

“It will be the single biggest potential displacement of Americans, certainly since the Great Depression,” Blasi added.

It’s admittedly hard to imagine this playing out in L.A. County, where most of the time I already wander around looking at desperate people spilling out of tents and RVs, wondering how anything could get worse. But it can, because if we go off this eviction cliff, the face of homelessness will forever go from what many Angelenos see as single adults, living in squalor with obvious signs of mental illness or substance abuse, to parents with their children in tow and nowhere to go.

According to UC Berkley’s Turner Center for Housing Innovation, close to 1 million renter households include someone who has lost a job because of the pandemic, [putting them at risk for eviction](#). That represents nearly 1 in 7 households of renters in the state, and almost half — 422,000 — are families with children.

In Blasi’s study, he predicts that of the 365,000 households that could be displaced in Los Angeles County, about 120,000 of them, including some 184,000 kids, are likely to become

homeless at some time over the next several months. After all, 30% of the rental households in California are here.

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“You’ll have the prospect of our sheriff’s deputies going to houses with landlords’ agents to physically remove families and all their property from buildings,” he predicted.

Think about that. Imagine seeing children along with adults in those encampments — after the shelters and hotel and motel rooms fill up.

All around the state, people are preparing for the worst.

In Los Angeles, St. Joseph Center, in addition to ramping up services and backfilling its food pantry, is pushing for rental assistance programs at the local level to act as a financial bridge to prevent families from being evicted.

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“There’s really no way that we can afford to see more families fall into homelessness,” said Va Lecia Adams Kellum, the nonprofit’s president and chief executive. “And we know that without eviction prevention and protections, it could happen and it could be catastrophic.”

In Sacramento, as in Los Angeles, shelters and homeless services agencies have seen a dramatic spike in the number of people seeking help.

“We have people who are calling us or showing up and saying, ‘I can’t pay my rent.’ ‘I haven’t been paying my rent. I know I’m gonna get evicted.’ So there’s the people who are anticipating their evictions,” said Shannon Stevens, program director for the women’s shelter Maryhouse. “And then there are the people who actually have been unlawfully evicted.”

Even in relatively rural Kern County, a study conducted for the advocacy group Faith in the Valley found that [at least 20,000 households with some 24,000 children](#) will be at risk of eviction if California goes off the cliff — thanks to layoffs in industries gutted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Of course, many things can — and most certainly will — happen between now and the

end of September.

For months, most eviction and foreclosure court proceedings in the state have been suspended, thanks to an order from the Judicial Council. But now, faced with a lawsuit filed on behalf of two landlords who say the rule-making body violated the Constitution by usurping the power of the Legislature, that order could be lifted as soon as Aug. 14.

Late Wednesday, [as my colleague Melody Gutierrez reported](#), Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) sent the Judicial Council a letter, asking for more time to act on two bills that would protect tenants from ruin, though at the [expense of mom-and-pop landlords](#), some of whom face banks pressuring them to pay mortgages.

They rightly warned of two and a half weeks of “chaos” if evictions are allowed to resume. “Speeding up the legislative process is nearly impossible, given the current precautions needed to reduce the risk of viral transmission during legislative business,” Atkins and Rendon wrote.

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Not mention that landlords would fast-track evictions, filing them online, putting the burden on tenants to respond within days and find a lawyer if they hope to keep a roof over their heads. A tall order during a pandemic.

So, for now, the only hope is that Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye will do renters and the Legislature a solid, and heed the request to extend the freeze on evictions and foreclosures until Labor Day. Or that Gov. Gavin Newsom will decide to take matters into his own hands and issue an executive order pausing all evictions until the Legislature can act.

Or — and this is a long shot — that landlords will choose to take pity on their tenants and give them more time to pay. Or — and this is an even longer shot — Congress will come through with [extension of expanded unemployment benefits](#), giving tenants money to pay their rent, or at least enough of it to satisfy their landlords. Or — and this is even a longer, longer shot — the state Employment Development Department will get its act together and actually start distributing unemployment benefits to desperate renters.

Even if California manages to avoid the cliff, no one should forget just how close we came to allowing tens of thousands of children to be tossed out of their houses and onto the

streets.

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That lawmakers are here at all, plotting last-minute rescue missions and contingency plans to ward off the unthinkable, is, yes, due to an unforeseen pandemic, which has killed thousands and upended the economy. But it's also the inevitable result of kicking the can down the road on all manner of things, from the lack of affordable housing that has led to rampant homelessness and poverty, to the systemic racism that has had a hand in every unfair way that COVID-19 has played out in California.

"We've been looking at this for a while, looking at affordability and looking at rents going up and up and up, and salaries not keeping pace with the increases," Adams Kellum said. "And, we in the homeless services community, seeing people falling into homelessness faster than we can pull them out due to systemic racism, due to this gap in affordability. And so it is quite the perfect storm."

She paused and then added:

"It does kind of build the case for, what should we have expected?"

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POLITICS

California's agency for protecting workers can't protect its own — even amid a pandemic, officials say



A crew with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power works in Encino. (Los Angeles Times)

By [JIE JENNY ZOU](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 7, 2020 | 5 AM

WASHINGTON — Staffers at California’s [Division of Occupational Safety and Health](#) have been frantically trying to keep up with an avalanche of workplace safety complaints ushered in by the pandemic.

But even answering phones hasn’t been easy. In one office with no bilingual speakers on staff, an employee has had to use Google Translate to try to decipher complaints in Spanish.

Six current and two former employees at the division, better known as Cal/OSHA, described a workforce rankled by years of vacancies and dysfunction that have compromised its mission to keep California workers safe.

A former employee, who resigned from the agency in February, said vacancies kept him and others inside the office instead of in the field investigating reports of amputated

fingers and falls.

Depleted ranks, the staff members say, have caused the agency to largely abandon in-person inspections in favor of remote investigations by letter and phone.

Staffers throughout the agency spoke to The Times on condition of anonymity, citing fears of retaliation. Several shared internal emails suggesting the agency was failing to implement the very COVID-19 guidelines it recommends to employers, such as requiring employees to wear face coverings, social distance and notify staff promptly of positive cases.

They said the agency is also not providing testing for staffers, leaving them to wonder if they are spreading infection while carrying out inspections of workplaces stricken by outbreaks.

A spokesperson confirmed the agency does not provide testing, but said officials encourage employees to promptly notify management of pending or positive test results.

On July 20, Cal/OSHA told employees it had temporarily shuttered its Monrovia office after at least one staffer tested positive for COVID-19. The office has eight inspectors responsible for investigating complaints, inspecting workplaces and responding to reports of job-related injuries, illnesses and deaths. It is one of four offices covering the [southwest region](#) that stretches from San Luis Obispo to Los Angeles.

The closure came weeks after staff members had [visited thousands of businesses](#) statewide as part of a task force blitz led by Gov. Gavin Newsom. Cal/OSHA said the infected employee did not participate in the blitz.

As the pandemic unfolded, Christopher Casteel, who worked as a safety inspector for three years, resigned in March after he said management ignored his request to telework due to

health concerns for himself and his wife.

“To have all those roadblocks and lack of support systems and failures at multiple layers all the way up to the top, it just becomes frustrating,” Casteel said.

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In an email, spokeswoman Erika Monterroza disputed claims that the agency is not taking sufficient COVID-19 precautions for its staff. The agency, she wrote, is helping staffers connect with medical services as needed and making “reasonable” accommodations for those in high-risk groups. However, there are “limitations on how much telework is available for certain positions, particularly enforcement personnel,” she wrote.

In a May public meeting, Chief Doug Parker said that his agency was dealing with a surge in complaints, which would be handled under a new “triage system,” with most concerns addressed remotely by communication with employers via letter or phone.

Monterroza said the agency’s ability to fulfill its mission has not been compromised by vacancies, noting that it has been processing thousands of complaints as “expeditiously as possible.”

But Garrett Brown, a former veteran inspector who has been tracking the agency’s staffing decline since he retired in 2014, said he couldn’t see how the vacancies could be anything but “crippling.”

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Brown regularly publishes staffing charts he receives through public records requests on his website, [Inside Cal/OSHA](#). Among the hardest-hit offices is the one in Fremont, which oversees the sprawling Tesla automotive factory and has just four inspectors despite being fully funded for 11, according to Brown. The Santa Ana office, which covers Orange County, is half-staffed with 6 out of 12 positions filled.

A Times review of staffing charts shows vacancies have been particularly severe across Southern California, with top leadership roles unfilled in the Santa Ana, San Bernardino, Van Nuys and Long Beach offices. Some of those vacancies have lasted years, employees said, causing enforcement cases to languish.

Cal/OSHA acknowledged “a high attrition rate” in a federal [report](#) last year and said getting “adequately staffed is a top priority.” A [staffing chart](#) published that month showed

91 vacancies agency-wide. Nearly a year later, a July staffing chart provided by Brown showed 135 vacancies agency-wide.

Alice Berliner, coordinator for the [Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health](#), said she was recently helping a group of workers file complaints against their employer to various Cal/OSHA offices with vacant leadership positions.

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"I don't know how in practice the agency can really function and respond to complaints when there's not clear leadership on the ground," she said.

Berliner and others who spoke to The Times all said Cal/OSHA's problems go beyond understaffing.

Last year, state auditors publicly released the findings of a long-running investigation into the Department of Industrial Relations — the parent agency of Cal/OSHA — which detailed a culture of [nepotism, fraud and gross misconduct](#) dating to 2011.

Despite reforms, dysfunction has continued to beset agency ranks, said Casteel, the former employee. In 2018, Casteel's district manager in Santa Ana was [arrested on bribery charges](#) involving a construction company facing safety violations. Then in November, an inspector in the same office was [convicted of embezzlement and fraud](#) in a case unrelated to his work for the agency.

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Spokeswoman Monterroza declined to comment on why the agency hired someone with [pending](#) criminal charges as an inspector.

Casteel worries that Cal/OSHA's depleted ranks and mismanagement may embolden employers to disobey laws and endanger workers, especially vulnerable immigrant workforces in areas such as Southern California.

"That's the part that grinds me to the core," said Casteel. "I've worked with these employees firsthand who are compromised on so many levels and struggling to survive, and one of the very few enforcement agencies whose sole damn function is to protect them is ignoring them."

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Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

How California is preparing for in-person voting this year due to coronavirus



Almost all California counties will offer in-person voting locations on Nov. 3 but with very different rules in response to COVID-19 fears. (Howard Lipin/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

By [JOHN MYERS](#) | SACRAMENTO BUREAU CHIEF

AUG. 7, 2020 | 5 AM

SACRAMENTO — Even as California elections officials prepare to mail ballots to all of the state's 21 million voters this fall, they do so with the expectation that some portion of the electorate will still choose to participate in person during the pandemic, requiring a delicate balance between voting rights and public health.

"We are preparing for, I think, the most unprecedented election in modern history," Secretary of State Alex Padilla said. "This is an all hands on deck moment."

After Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order in June [outlining new voting location](#)

[rules](#) — a plan ratified on Thursday by the Legislature — county officials have scrambled to determine how many in-person locations they can muster and how many days they can keep them open. Added to that is uncertainty over whether there will be enough short-term workers who are willing to work more than a single day and also enforce strict coronavirus safety measures.

“I think all counties have struggled a bit,” said Brandi Orth, registrar of voters in Fresno County and president of the state association of elections officials. “It is an extreme, additional lift.”

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Few problems are more pressing than finding locations that meet strict guidelines for physical distancing. The tradition of cramming ballot-marking booths into a neighbor’s garage or a room at a senior care facility is, at least for this election, a nonstarter.

A [detailed set of instructions written by state officials last month](#) urges at least six feet of space between voting equipment and voter check-in locations. In some tight spots, the guide urges the use of plexiglass partitions. And marked spaces on the floor, similar to those in retail and grocery stores, should be used for voters waiting to cast a ballot.

“There will be lines because you just can’t physically put all of those people together,” Orth said.

To lessen the chance of long lines, state officials have encouraged counties to offer four days of in-person voting, from Saturday, Oct. 31 through election day. But this too presents problems for communities that have traditionally relied on places of worship or a variety of public buildings for voting locations.

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With physical space and extra time as the primary requirements, some counties are far from securing what they need. Janna Hayes, a spokesperson for Sacramento County, said elections officials have so far found fewer than half the number of voting locations used in the March presidential primary.

“We continue to need community partners, businesses — both public and private locations — school districts, to step up and offer services and locations,” Hayes said.

Fifteen California counties, including Sacramento, Los Angeles and Orange, had opted for multi-day voting before the outbreak of the coronavirus. Voters in those counties can use in-person sites for a variety of elections services. But most are unlikely to offer 15 days of in-person voting and focus time and resources on the final leg of the election cycle instead.

“When you look at the data, voters’ habits do not change,” said Neal Kelley, the registrar of voters in Orange County. “They wait until the weekend before and they go out.”

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Kelly says his voting centers will be open for five days — in part, to limit the potential coronavirus risks to election workers.

“It doesn’t make sense to expose my staff,” he said.

Election workers will be expected to follow strict public health rules, including sanitizing voting equipment at each site and wearing gloves and other protective equipment.

But that won’t be required of voters.

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“Election workers must not turn a voter away for lack of face covering,” says the 52-page guide compiled by Padilla’s office for local officials. “The right to vote takes precedence.”

Voters who arrive without a mask will be offered one along with those wearing masks with a slogan of support for a candidate, a violation of rules banning electioneering at the polls. And for those who refuse a mask, election officials are expected to designate at least one voting booth far from the others.

With mask mandates sparking angry outbursts in a number of California communities, election workers will be trained in how to limit conflict and ensure safety at the voting site.

“Election workers should be provided with instructions to call the county elections office if they feel threatened or intimidated, if voters feel threatened or intimidated, or if a disturbance of any kind occurs,” the state guide says. “Election workers should be instructed to call local law enforcement first if they believe the safety of any person in the polling place is in jeopardy.”

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In Orange County, [a hotbed of anti-mask sentiment](#), Kelley says he has ordered some 300,000 masks for voting locations and is producing training videos for election workers with detailed instructions on easing any tensions that arise.

“The last thing I want is our staff having to get into a conflict,” he said.

Coronavirus precautions will also require a new focus on protecting paper ballots. State officials are asking local workers to post a reminder on signs inside voting locations: “Your ballot is fragile; make sure your hands are dry and your sanitizer has evaporated.”

In-person voting is not the only challenge for local election officials who expect high turnout and a deluge of absentee ballots dropped off at local drop boxes and election offices or sent in the mail. A special provision has been made for the November election allowing ballots postmarked by election day to be counted even if they arrive 17 days late.

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Election workers, who often work in pairs to retrieve ballots from drop boxes as a security measure, will be asked not to travel together and instead follow each other in their own cars. Those paired workers should be kept together to avoid additional mixing, the state guide says, and the keys that open the drop boxes should be disinfected.

Additional space to process and count ballots is also needed, state officials said. In Fresno County, Orth said she’s already secured more warehouse space to spread her staff out for the ballot counting process.

There are also fears that election workers might contract COVID-19 either right before or after the election, leading to a slowdown in work or the need for well-trained backup

employees.

Orth's team got a preview of what that could look like late last month, after three Fresno County government employees who assist with candidate campaign documents had to quarantine at home for up to two weeks after possible virus exposure.

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"We worked long hours to make up for their absence," she said.

The challenges in planning for in-person voting have received little attention, overshadowed by California's high-profile push to encourage as many voters as possible to cast their ballots from home. But some, particularly those who speak a language other than English and those with physical limitations, are still likely to seek out an in-person voting location.

"I don't think those people are going to change just because we're mailing them a ballot," said John Gardner, the assistant registrar of voters in Solano County. "Some people like normal. And you don't like making a lot of changes [to election rules] in a presidential election year."

Padilla, whose office championed the effort to mail a ballot to all registered voters, said it's important to make sure everyone finds the manner of voting that suits them best.

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"Out of respect to California's large, diverse electorate, we know that in-person options are necessary. They're not optional."

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OPINION • Opinion

California stacks the deck in favor of public sector unions





In this August 2016 file photo, the dome of the state Capitol glows in the early evening in Sacramento. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli, File)

By **MICHAEL SALTSMAN** | |

PUBLISHED: August 6, 2020 at 8:58 a.m. | UPDATED: August 6, 2020 at 8:59 a.m.



California has found the solution to revitalize labor unions: Stack the deck in the unions' favor.

Look no further than last week's election victory by the SEIU and AFSCME, who are now the representatives of more than 40,000 state-funded child care providers under the banner Childcare Providers United. Labor trumpeted a stunning 97 percent victory in the election.

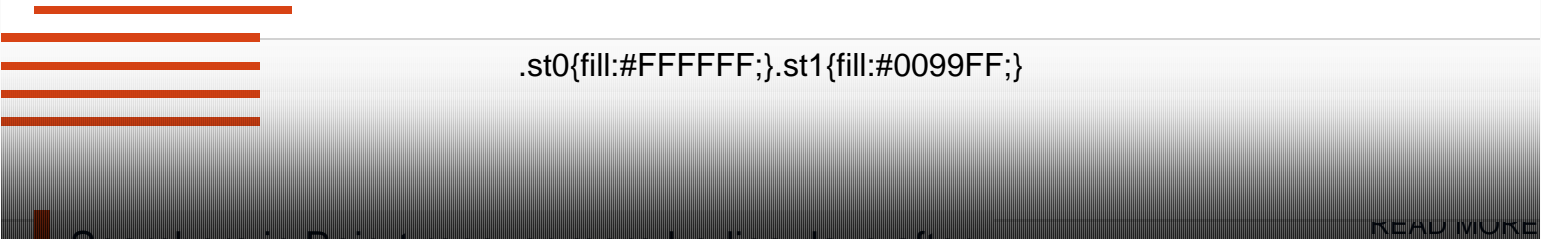
The unions' pathway to this union dues payday is a sordid tale of everything that's wrong with modern-day public sector unions.

The SEIU has sought to unionize state-funded childcare providers in California for nearly two decades. These are not state employees; rather, they're independent childcare providers—small



business owners—reimbursed by the state through CalWORKS for care provided to low-income families. (Roughly 43,000 such providers receive these vouchers.) There’s no “management” to speak of that the SEIU is standing up to, and no employees it’s standing up for; rather, the union wants a cut of the reimbursement money.

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Until last year, the union wasn't legally able to organize these providers. The union had its allies in the legislature pass several bills in past years to permit an organizing drive, but both Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed these bills. In his veto message in 2011, Brown cited the price tag of the program to the state, saying he was "reluctant to embark on a program of this magnitude and cost."

Brown was right to be concerned: An analysis prepared last year for the Assembly Appropriations committee put the added costs at "likely in the tens of millions of dollars annually"— and that's just for the reimbursements. Last year, the feds put a stop to a similar scheme where the SEIU skimmed Medicaid money on its way to in-home healthcare providers—which cost an estimated \$200 million annually.

In Gov. Newsom, the SEIU finally found an ally who didn't share these reservations about cost. The union spent big to put Newsom in office in 2018, and he delivered for them: The union's allies in the legislature sent a childcare union bill to his desk in 2019 (Assembly Bill 378), and he signed it. The state legislature even did the union's homework — adding a provision in the bill requiring the state to provide emails, cell numbers, and home addresses of all state-funded providers.

When Newsom signed the bill in 2019, AFSCME President Lee Saunders declared that the "largest union organizing campaign in the country" was now underway. SEIU and AFSCME launched their campaign website that same day. But the outcome was never in doubt: The unions had the contact info to get the cards signed necessary to trigger an election, they had the contact info to campaign for a "yes" vote — and, most importantly, they had no one to oppose them.

The election dynamic was further stacked in the unions' favor by the use of a mail-in ballot: Child care providers were given a one-month period to return their ballots, and only 9,300 of the 43,000 eligible voters did so. It appears the unions knew who their supporters were, and they were able to concentrate resources on getting supportive ballots returned.

The win will net the unions a cool \$5 million annually in dues (\$10 per month per provider), while thousands of providers who were too busy worrying about COVID to pay attention to the election will wonder why they're now paying dues to SEIU and AFSCME.

It's a nasty cycle: Unions write the legislation, their favored legislators pass it, and the resulting dues payments get funneled back to support more advocacy for union priorities. Who loses? The people footing the bill.

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Proposition 21 will make the housing crisis worse. Vote No.

Unions are nothing if not determined, and they operate with a long time horizon. This childcare battle spanned three different governors.

Now, labor has turned its attention to gig workers; they're spending big to oppose Proposition 22 this fall, which would maintain gig workers' freedom to work independently rather than forcing them to become employees.

Once again, labor is trying to stack the deck: A description of the ballot measure, drafted by the same state attorney general that labor helped put in office, paints the initiative in an inaccurate and unflattering light. A study to support labor's position, released through UC-Santa Cruz, was debunked after public records showed that labor groups wrote the "unrepresentative" survey.

There's one important difference between the childcare "election" and the Proposition 22 fight: This fall, voters will get to hear the other side. And unions have no good retort to gig workers' widespread opposition to becoming unionized employees.

Michael Saltsman is Managing Director at the Employment Policies Institute.

They're Children at Risk of Abuse, and Their Caseworkers Are Stuck Home

Scores of investigations into allegations of abuse or neglect have been delayed or sharply curtailed during the coronavirus pandemic, records and interviews show.

By Garrett Theroff, Daniel Lempres and Aksaule Alzhan

Aug. 7, 2020 Updated 8:37 a.m. ET

TOLLHOUSE, Calif. — In February, the child abuse hotline for Tollhouse, a small community in the Central Valley, received the first of several tips raising urgent concerns about the well-being of twin infant boys.

Child welfare workers quickly concluded that the infants, just 2 days old, were at grave risk. When they visited the mother, Kristina Braden, she readily admitted that her methamphetamine addiction had continued far into her pregnancy, case records show. This same addiction had contributed to a well-documented history of neglect that had already caused Ms. Braden to lose custody of her three older children.

The warning signs should have triggered an immediate intervention to protect the babies. Yet for the next month, as the coronavirus took off and California declared a stay-at-home order statewide in mid-March, the child welfare agency did almost nothing other than asking Ms. Braden to take a drug test, which she failed to do, records show.

The agency intervened only after an employee noticed that Ms. Braden had posted on Facebook that one child, Aiden, had died. The posting came 38 days after the initial call to the hotline.

Autopsy results are pending, but child welfare officials have determined that Aiden's death was the result of neglect; his mother, who declined to comment, was found to be on methamphetamines the day after Aiden's body was discovered in her bed, and the surviving infant was immediately removed from her care. Ms. Braden has not been criminally charged.

Throughout California, child welfare workers are deemed essential workers with life-or-death duties. But unlike police officers or firefighters, most child welfare workers are now working from home in an effort to limit the spread of the virus. As a result, records and interviews show, scores of investigations into allegations of abuse or neglect have been delayed or sharply curtailed during the pandemic.

In Fresno County, where Tollhouse sits in the foothills on the edge of the Sierra Nevada, about a third of the child welfare staff went on leave as the pandemic spread. Even those who remained on the job generally did work they could manage without leaving their homes.

Tricia Gonzalez, the head of Fresno County's child protective services, said that as the outbreak accelerated, the agency struggled to maintain basic operations and was "trying to figure out how to basically turn everything around immediately." The slow response to the Braden infants, she acknowledged, is symptomatic of the wider delays throughout the system.

"That's not my preference, it's not my expectation, but it is the reality due to my work force," she said.

As the virus continues to rage across the country, it is vital for child welfare workers to have regular in-person contact with at-risk children, those who study child abuse say. The pandemic has cut many children off from routine interactions with teachers, counselors and doctors who are required by law to report signs of abuse or neglect. (Indeed, calls to child abuse hotlines have plummeted nationwide.)

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Now many vulnerable children are largely out of sight, many of them cooped up in crowded apartments, often cared for by parents reeling from job loss and all the other stresses brought on by a pandemic with no discernible end.

Yet many child welfare workers — who fear infection and often lack adequate personal protective equipment, including masks, face shields, gloves and hand sanitizer — have stopped performing a broad range of essential duties that typically require in-person visits.

The shift has been encouraged by the Trump administration, which issued guidance to child welfare agencies in March that relaxed a series of rules requiring caseworkers to meet face to face with abused or neglected children. In interviews, child welfare administrators in several states said they still have struggled to keep their caseworkers on the job, and some have begun offering hazard pay and free child care.

The consequences are now rippling across California, which has the highest rate of child poverty in the nation when the cost of living is taken into account, an environment that research shows puts children at an elevated risk of abuse and neglect. One in seven children in California is reported to a child abuse hotline by age 5, and at any given time nearly 90,000 children live under the oversight of California's county-run child protective services agencies.

Under pressure from the Service Employees International Union, which represents child welfare workers, the rules governing this oversight were relaxed throughout the state in March to protect workers from the virus. After lobbying from the union, Gov. Gavin Newsom dropped a requirement mandating in-person visits by caseworkers to some 60,000 children in foster care, as well as 14,000 children who remain with their own families after being recently abused or neglected. The policy was in place for more than three months, until Mr. Newsom recently reversed it.

"You're not going to get to the truth if you do it over the phone," said Moses Castillo, a recently retired Los Angeles Police Department detective who spent more than a decade investigating child abuse cases.

In interviews, union officials defended their efforts to limit direct contact between child welfare workers and at-risk children. The virus, they argued, presents too big a threat to workers and children alike. "Obviously, this is the new normal and we need to make sure we're assessing for abuse and neglect and doing it in a way that we can protect the social workers that families depend upon," David Green, a lead negotiator for the union, said.

At the same time, many caseworkers have complained about a lack of personal protective equipment for months. Critical supplies have been rushed to hospitals and other front-line essential workers, but they have been slow to reach those responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect. Some have said privately that they have been forced to buy their own.

The union said it is trying to meet the needs of all its workers.

Scott Murray, a spokesman for Mr. Newsom, said the governor was trying to balance the competing demands of preventing the spread of the virus while also keeping watch over vulnerable children. "California will continue to work to protect child welfare and public health during these trying and uncertain times," he said.

Since the start of the pandemic, child welfare workers have been exempt from stay-at-home orders because they have the legal responsibility to take emergency custody of abused children and, when necessary, place them in foster care.

Yet leaders at the federal, state and local levels have pushed these workers to carry out their duties from home as much as possible to limit the virus's spread. The child welfare agency for Los Angeles County, the largest in the nation, has locked its doors, cutting off public access to the agency's headquarters and 19 field offices. In addition to suspending public access, the agency's leaders sent home virtually all employees.

The Coronavirus Outbreak >

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Updated August 6, 2020

Why are bars linked to outbreaks?

Think about a bar. Alcohol is flowing. It can be loud, but it's definitely intimate, and you often need to lean in close to hear your friend. And strangers have way, way fewer reservations about coming up to people in a bar. That's sort of the point of a bar. Feeling good and close to strangers. It's no surprise, then, that bars have been linked to outbreaks in several states. Louisiana health officials have tied at least 100 coronavirus cases to bars in the Tigerland nightlife district in Baton Rouge. Minnesota has traced 328 recent cases to bars across the state. In Idaho, health officials shut down bars in Ada County after reporting clusters of infections among young adults who had visited several bars in

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Many abused children whom the agency deemed to be living under "high" or "very high" risk of renewed abuse were not visited for months, records and interviews show. Before the pandemic, child welfare workers in Los Angeles were required to at least try visiting children within five days of a new abuse allegation. Now they are allowed to take up to 10 days to respond to most new reports of mistreatment.

"We are in completely uncharted territory, and it concerns me greatly," said Bobby Cagle, the director of the child welfare agency for Los Angeles County.

"The difficulty here," he added, "is that we're trying to balance the need for making those visits with the need to also protect our staff and to protect the child and family."

A review of hundreds of pages of internal records, as well as interviews with dozens of child protective services workers, shows how California's labor leaders also pressured key officials into letting caseworkers stay home.

In March, the union representing child abuse caseworkers began pushing Mr. Newsom's administration to set aside long-established rules to allow its members to work remotely.

For a 10-week period ending June 30, for example, caseworkers were no longer required to fingerprint people applying to be foster parents; instead they ran their names through a database to check for any criminal history. And when older teenagers and young adults in foster care needed to change homes, caseworkers no longer visited to make sure the new residences were safe. A phone check was considered sufficient.

In interviews, some caseworkers said they had bristled at the efforts to get them out of the field, and they questioned why more effort was not put instead into training and equipping them to safely visit children.

Los Angeles County is still dealing with the fallout from the 2013 death of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez, whose caseworkers faced criminal charges for failing to protect him until a judge dismissed the case last month.

The lack of regular in-person visits by child welfare staff gave his mother and her boyfriend more chances to torture him unnoticed, court records show, and the agency pledged to never allow such a case to happen again. Gabriel's mother and her boyfriend were each convicted of first-degree murder. Yet because of the virus, the division once responsible for Gabriel was exempted from the in-person visitation requirements.

The child welfare system that made the decision to keep the offices closed is overseen by the County Board of Supervisors, whose five members were all endorsed by the service union.

One supervisor, Hilda Solis, said in a statement that she was trying to get caseworkers the protective equipment they need to do more. The other four supervisors referred questions to a county spokeswoman. "There are no perfect answers to the questions we have been dealing with," Amara Suarez, the spokeswoman, said. "But we have endeavored always to balance the needs of children, families and staff in all decisions."

Laurence Du Sault, Ricky Rodas and Alyson Stamos contributed reporting. *The reporters can be found on Twitter @gtherolf, @DaniellEmpres, @RickyTheRodas, @aksaula_alzhan, @alysonstamos and @laurencedsault.*

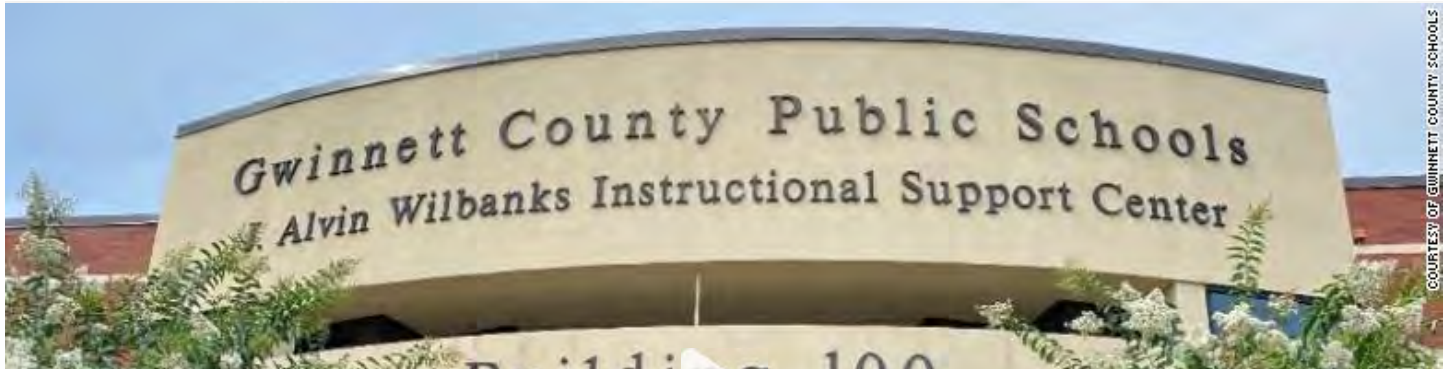
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A 7-year-old boy in Georgia died of Covid-19, the youngest victim in the state

By **Jamie Lynch** and Theresa Waldrop, CNN

🕒 Updated 10:00 PM ET, Thu August 6, 2020

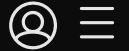


COURTESY OF GWINNETT COUNTY SCHOOLS



US

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260 Georgia school employees unable to work due to Covid-19 02:22

(CNN) — A 7-year-old African American boy has died of Covid-19 in Georgia, the youngest victim of the virus in the state, according to data compiled by the state health department.

The boy was from Chatham County on Georgia's coast, and had no underlying health conditions.

"Every COVID-19 death we report is tragic, but to lose someone so young is especially heart-breaking," Dr. Lawton Davis, the Health Director for the Coastal Health District, said in a statement.

"We know that older individuals and those with underlying conditions are at higher risk of complications, but this is a disease everyone should take seriously," Davis said.

The boy's death isn't the first among children in the US. In Florida alone, at least [seven minors have died](#) from Covid-19. Last month, [a 9-year-old girl](#) who had no underlying medical conditions was the youngest to die in the state.

In Georgia, a [second grader tested positive](#) for Covid-19 after attending the first day of school this week, the Cherokee County School District told CNN.

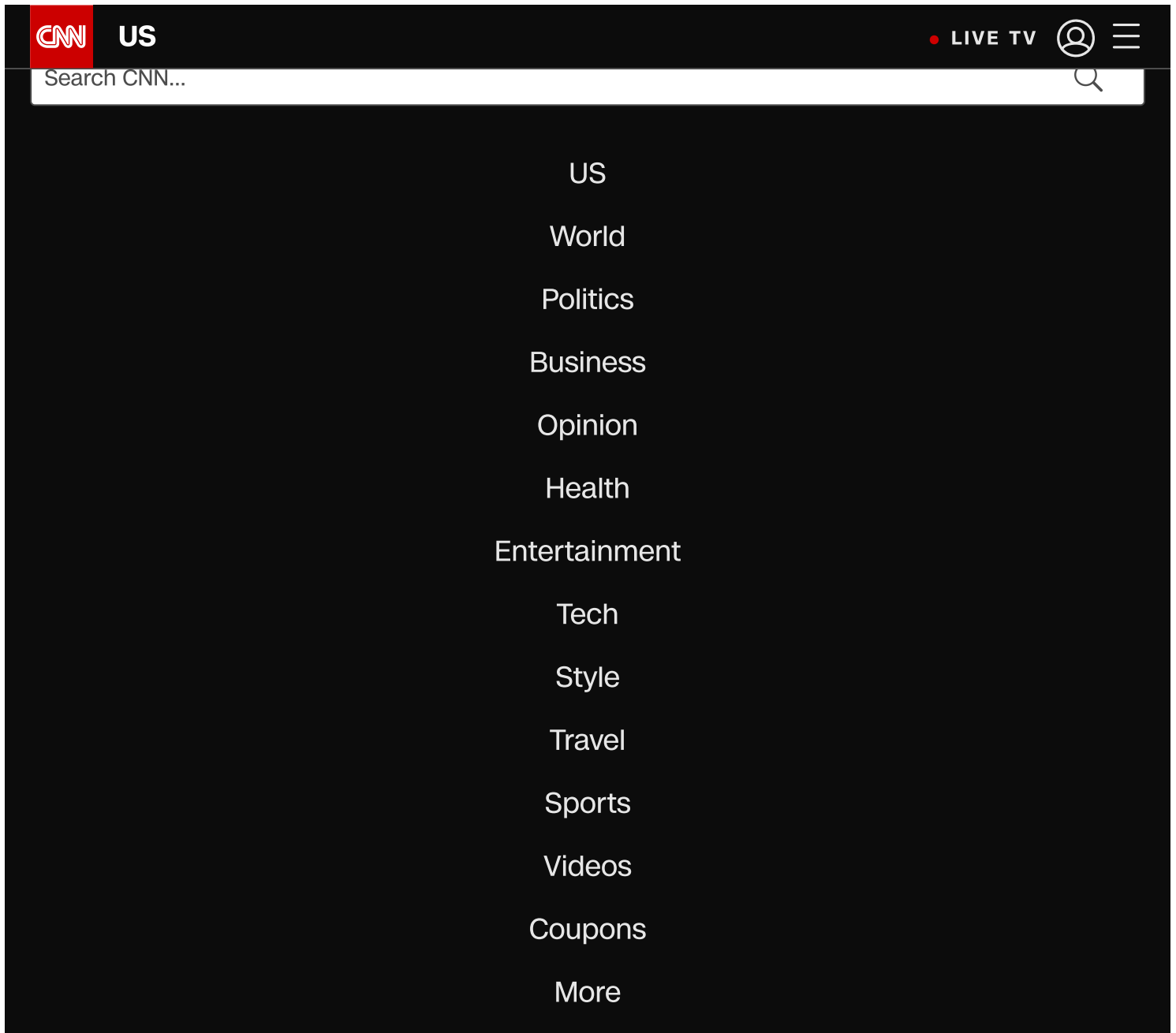
Chatham County is reporting 5,441 confirmed cases of the virus and 74 deaths.

The state of Georgia has reported 204,895 cases and 4,026 deaths.

"Please watch out for each other, wear a mask in public, wash your hands often, and stay home if you're sick," Davis said. "A community-wide crisis demands a community-wide response, and we all must do our part to keep each other safe."

The numbers in this report were released by the Coastal Health District and the Georgia Department of Health and may not line up exactly in real time with CNN's database drawn from Johns Hopkins University and the Covid Tracking Project.

Related Article: Study finds higher viral load in young children, raising questions about how likely they are to transmit the coronavirus



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HEALTH

Who Should Pay for Covid-19 Testing in the Workplace?

When small businesses seek to screen employees for infection, not all health insurers will foot the bill

By [Sarah Krouse](#) and [Anna Wilde Mathews](#)

Aug. 7, 2020 5:30 am ET

Connecticut manufacturing company Mott Corp. hired an urgent-care clinic in May to regularly test workers for Covid-19 to avoid workplace outbreaks and give workers peace of mind. The medical group asked the company's insurer whether testing costs would be covered.

The answer was no.

Now Mott pays more than \$30,000 a month to test 150 employees biweekly for the disease caused by the new coronavirus. The company has so far found six people who were infected but experienced no symptoms, Chief Executive Boris Levin said.

Insurers don't have to cover workplace Covid-19 testing that an employer does to broadly screen for infection among employees, according to federal guidance and Connecticut's insurance rules. They are required to pay for tests a doctor orders as part of diagnosing or treating a patient, or for testing those who have been in contact with an infected person.

Most large companies are self-insured and pay their own health-care costs. They have flexibility on how they pay for workplace screening programs. But for smaller companies that aren't paying their own health claims, the ability to test workers often depends on what their health insurers are required—or willing—to cover.

There is an evolving patchwork of coverage rules across the U.S., with some benefits executives pressing for additional federal funding to pay for more widespread testing. In states that allow cost-sharing for employee testing, workers may pay part of the cost out of their pocket—even if the test is technically covered by an insurer.

Some executives say the risk of asymptomatic transmission of Covid-19 makes regularly testing workers critical.



“We probably prevent a much larger spread” that could force the company to abruptly shut down, Mr. Levin said. Mott is employee-owned and makes high-precision filtration products for companies in the health-care, semiconductor, defense and aerospace industries.

When a state requires coverage of workplace testing, it is typically tied to specific industries or types of workplaces.

In West Virginia, insurers must cover workplace testing for child-care and nursing-home workers without imposing any cost-sharing.



California says insurers should cover workplace testing regardless of symptoms for essential workers, such as people who work in grocery stores, agricultural facilities, public transit and education, though those workers might be subject to cost-sharing such as copays or meeting a deductible. Insurers may deny coverage if a worker doesn't first try to seek testing from an in-network provider or didn't contact the health insurer for help finding such a provider.

Some state rules have evolved as the demand for testing has outstripped supply and states have sought ways to preserve tests for those with symptoms or known contact with infected individuals.



Crystal Steinfeld, an environment, health and safety manager for Mott, administered coronavirus testing at the company on Thursday.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Large insurers including [CVS Health Corp.](#) [CVS +0.13%](#)  's [Aetna](#), [UnitedHealth Group Inc.](#) [UNH +0.82%](#)  and [Cigna Corp.](#) say they are paying for coronavirus tests that health-care providers order to diagnose or treat individual patients, as federal law requires. But they generally aren't covering tests performed at an employer's behest for broad screening purposes, they say.

Health insurers haven't traditionally covered other types of workplace testing, such as screening for illicit drugs, say consultants and health-benefits experts.

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If you have been tested for Covid-19 at work, who paid for it? Join the conversation below.

Employer coronavirus screening is “not medically necessary. It is for the safety of the workplace,” said Steve Wojcik, a vice president at the Business Group on Health, which represents employers. “Like other workplace safety measures, it wouldn't come through the health plan.”

Workplace benefits and other trade groups have written to congressional leaders for both parties in recent weeks, asking for additional federal resources to pay for Covid-19 testing. Groups including the American Benefits Council, the Business Group on Health and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, say employers alone shouldn't have to foot the bill for the widespread testing that is required.

“The employers that will incur the greatest challenges associated with widespread testing in order to bring employees back to the workplace are among the enterprises that have been hardest hit by the economic consequences of the pandemic,” they wrote.



CEO Boris Levin, far left, with Mott employees.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Starting in May, Haidee Lim, an owner of Los Altos, Calif.-based Baby World, paid testing company Kyla a \$10-a-month subscription fee per employee for about 15 workers to get tested each week. Insurance covered the tests until California’s reimbursement rules changed in July, incentivizing the use of in-network providers and clarifying that employees might be responsible for cost-sharing. The changes mean Baby World’s testing costs could rise to as much as \$3,900 a month, depending on how much insurers agree to cover.

The day-care center focuses on babies and toddlers, serving more than 60 families before the pandemic. Now, 15 employees work shorter hours caring for 16 children and the business is no longer breaking even.

Ms. Lim says some of her workers’ insurance providers agreed to continue covering weekly testing. One of the providers pays for one test a month and Kyla has agreed to pay for any uncovered testing because the business was an early customer.

Garick Hismatullin, Kyla’s chief executive, fears that changing reimbursement requirements might further upend his business model, which relies on reimbursements, and lead to new cost-sharing expenses for essential workers. “Who is going to be paying for this? That’s the question it keeps coming back to,” he said.

Masks May Reduce Viral Dose, Some Experts Say

People wearing face coverings will take in fewer coronavirus particles, evidence suggests, making disease less severe.

By Katherine J. Wu

Published July 27, 2020 Updated July 29, 2020

Researchers have long known that masks can prevent people from spreading airway germs to others — findings that have driven much of the conversation around these crucial accessories during the coronavirus pandemic.

But now, as cases continue to rise across the country, experts are pointing to an array of evidence suggesting that masks also protect the people wearing them, lessening the severity of symptoms, or in some instances, staving off infection entirely.

Different kinds of masks “block virus to a different degree, but they all block the virus from getting in,” said Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease physician at the University of California, San Francisco. If any virus particles do breach these barriers, she said, the disease might still be milder.

Dr. Gandhi and her colleagues make this argument in a new paper slated to be published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. Drawing from animal experiments and observations of various events during the pandemic, they contend that people wearing face coverings will take in fewer coronavirus particles, making it easier for their immune systems to bring any interlopers to heel.

Dr. Tsion Firew, an emergency physician at Columbia University who wasn't involved in the work, cautioned that the links between masking and milder disease haven't yet been proved as cause and effect. Even so, the new paper “reiterates what we say about masks,” she said. “It's not just a selfless act.”

Ideas about the importance of viral dose in the development of disease have cropped up in the medical literature since at least the 1930s, when two researchers formally noted that mice exposed to larger quantities of germs were more likely to die. More recently, scientists have gone as far as to puff different amounts of a flu virus up the noses of human volunteers. The more virus in this nasal plume, they found, the likelier the participants were to get infected and experience symptoms.

That sort of experiment can't be done ethically for the new coronavirus, given how dangerous it is. But earlier this year, a team of researchers in China tried something similar in hamsters: They housed coronavirus-infected and healthy animals in adjoining cages, some of which were separated by buffers made of surgical masks. Many of the healthy hamsters behind the partitions never got infected. And the unlucky animals who did got less sick than their “maskless” neighbors.

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Some indirect data has been accumulating from people as well. Researchers have tentatively estimated that about 40 percent of coronavirus infections do not produce any symptoms. But when some people wear masks, the proportion of asymptomatic cases seems to skyrocket, reportedly surpassing 90 percent during one outbreak at a seafood plant in Oregon. Wearing a face covering doesn't make people impervious to infection, but these trends of asymptomatic cases could suggest that masks lead to milder disease, potentially reducing hospitalizations and deaths.

Particularly compelling, Dr. Gandhi said, is the data from cruise ships, which pack big groups of people into close quarters. More than 80 percent of those infected aboard Japan's *Diamond Princess* in February — before masking had become common practice — came down with symptoms, she noted. But on another vessel that left Argentina in March, and on which all passengers were issued surgical masks after someone onboard came down with a fever, the level of symptomatic cases was below 20 percent.

Some independent experts say the paper is a welcome update, given the pervasive idea that wearing a mask is a mostly altruistic act.

“It's been a real deficiency in the messaging about masking to say that it only protects the other,” said Charles Haas, an environmental engineer and expert in risk assessment at Drexel University. “From the get go, that never made sense scientifically.”

In other settings, too, from hospitals to hair salons, face coverings may have driven down rates of overall infection, perhaps preventing disastrous outbreaks. And countries like Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, where outbreaks quickly sparked a wave of widespread masking, managed to rein in the number of coronavirus-related hospitalizations and deaths early on.

Even in the United States, the slow upward tick in mask-wearing has coincided with what appears to be a more modest death rate, compared to the surge that occurred after the virus first made landfall in North America. These trends have also likely been influenced by increased testing, a downward shift in the average age of people contracting the virus and improvements in coronavirus treatments. Still, masks probably aren't hurting things, Dr. Gandhi said.

The idea that face coverings can curb disease severity, although not yet proven, "makes complete sense," said Linsey Marr, an expert in virus transmission at Virginia Tech. "It's another good argument for wearing masks."

The Coronavirus Outbreak ›

Frequently Asked Questions

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Dr. Marr and other researchers are still sussing out exactly how much inbound or outbound virus different types of masks block. But based on a wealth of past evidence and recent observations, the amount that's filtered out is probably high — perhaps 50 percent or more of the larger aerosols being sent in both directions, Dr. Marr said. Certain coverings, like N95 respirators, will do better than others, but even looser-fitting cloths can waylay some viral particles.

Still, some experts are not ready to embrace all ideas about two-way protection.

What's outlined in Dr. Gandhi's paper "is still just a theory, and needs more research," said Nancy Leung, an epidemiologist at the University of Hong Kong. While there's good evidence that masks reduce the spread of viruses within a population, it's much harder to nail down how face coverings influence symptoms, Dr. Leung said, in part "because of the difficulty in conducting those studies."

Dr. Gandhi acknowledged these limitations. But with no end to the pandemic in sight, the need for masks is only growing, she said, especially as researchers continue to document the virus's ability to spread silently. Even people who don't have symptoms can spray the virus into their environment when they sneeze, cough, sing, speak or even breathe. And those who fall ill may be at their most contagious in the days before the first signs of sickness appear.

To tame this pandemic, people should act as if they've been infected, "even if you feel right as rain," Dr. Gandhi said.

Masks alone aren't a substitute for other public health measures like physical distancing and good hygiene. But unlike sustained lockdowns that keep people apart, shielding our faces is easier and more sustainable, Dr. Gandhi said.

Safeguarding yourself and others from this deadly disease, she added, "is as simple as covering up the two holes in your face that shed the virus."

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