



LOCAL NEWS • News

San Bernardino County coronavirus deaths up to 546 as state releases data backlog



By **JENNIFER IYER** | jiyer@scng.com | Redlands Daily Facts

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The number of San Bernardino County residents who have died due to complications from coronavirus went up 8.8% Sunday, Aug. 9, to 546, but the county says that alarming number is due to the state correcting a weeks-long backlog.

“The state is working on its data clean-up of nearly 300,000 records statewide,” said county spokesman David Wert. “These cases have begun to be ‘dumped’ into the local jurisdictions and we expected to see a lot today. “

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The new number of deaths, 44, is second only to a one-day high of 59 set Aug. 4, which was almost triple the previous record.

Wert added the state said the “dump” of positive case, death and testing numbers should be finished by Tuesday.

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“This will cause fluctuations in positivity rates and cases per 100,000 that may not accurately reflect our true status,” Wert said. “As the week progresses, this should be corrected and be accurate by the end of the week.”

The number of patients tested spiked by 11,229 Sunday, or about 4.2% from the day before. That was the second-highest one-day total of tests reported by the county. The highest number, 11,541, was reported on July 17.

Here’s a look at the updated numbers, according to county and state public health officials.

San Bernardino County

Cases: 35,712, up from 35,452 Saturday

Deaths: 546, up from 502 Saturday

Hospitalizations: 485 Saturday, down from 493 Friday; suspected patients: 69 Saturday, up from 60 Friday

Intensive-care unit patients: 153 Saturday, down from 157 Friday; suspected patients: 8 Saturday, same as Friday

Recoveries: 27,940, up from 27,665 Saturday

Skilled-nursing facilities: Residents: 1,480 Friday (latest data); deaths: 222 Friday. Employee cases: 941 Friday

State prisons in San Bernardino County, cases: 192 active in-custody cases

People tested: 278,119, up from 266,890 Saturday

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

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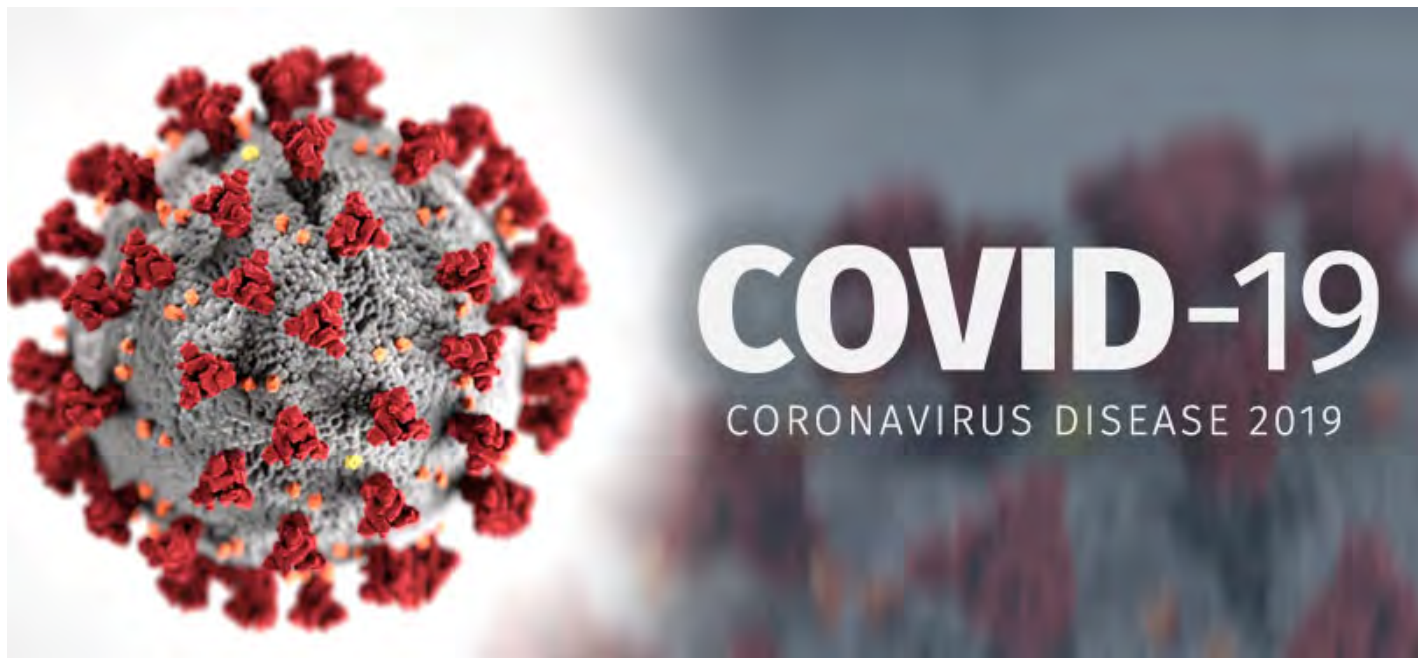
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UPDATE: Nine more coronavirus deaths are reported in Fontana on Aug. 9

Aug 7, 2020



A total of 58 Fontana residents have died from the coronavirus as of Aug. 9.

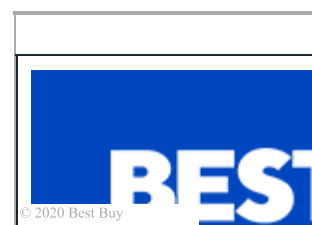
Nine more coronavirus deaths were reported in Fontana on Aug. 9, the city's highest one-day total since the pandemic began, according to the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health.

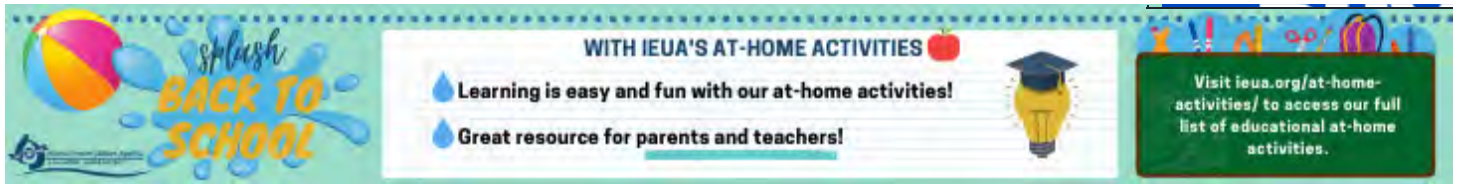
Fontana now has a total of 58 deaths related to COVID-19, the county said.

Fontana also has 4,638 cases of coronavirus. The City of San Bernardino has the most cases (5,624) and deaths (68) of any city in the county.

Overall, San Bernardino County has 35,712 cases and 546 deaths.

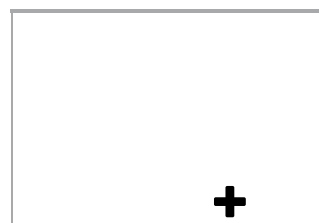
A total of 278,119 persons in the county have taken a PCR test for COVID-19, and the positivity rate is 12.8 percent.





The county is urging all residents to be tested, whether they have symptoms or not.

In Fontana, testing is held inside the Jessie Turner Center, 15556 Summit Avenue, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. through Aug. 31. Testing is by appointment only. Appointments can be made by visiting sbccovid19.com.



https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/arrowhead-regional-medical-center-appoints-dr-sam-hessami-as-chief-medical-officer/article_0c84737e-d8f4-11ea-8245-e7428558d7a5.html

Arrowhead Regional Medical Center appoints Dr. Sam Hessami as Chief Medical Officer

Aug 7, 2020



Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC) has appointed Sam Hessami, MD, MHA, FACHE, as Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC) has appointed Sam Hessami, MD, MHA, FACHE, as Chief Medical Officer (CMO) effective immediately.

As a double board-certified physician with nearly two decades of clinical and leadership expertise in hospital department management and service line development, along with clinical quality, safety, and utilization improvement experience, he brings a well-rounded breadth of knowledge to the position.



In this role he will advise and lead physicians in support of ARMC's mission and goals, and work with senior leadership to refine the hospital's strategic direction, ARMC said in a news release.

In his most recent role as chief patient safety officer at St. Joseph's Health System, a 651-bed academic medical center in New Jersey, he developed and implemented a comprehensive system-wide educational plan to advance the concept of a "safe and just culture."

Other notable career accomplishments include driving the strategic direction of Hackensack Meridian Palisades Women's Group, which resulted in expanded women's services and creating and managing a new hospital-sponsored faculty practice in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

"Dr. Hessami's distinguished career makes him an ideal candidate to lead ARMC's medical team and spearhead innovative initiatives for continued advancements at the medical center," said ARMC Hospital Director William Gilbert. "His broad experience in hospital administration, combined with his significant assets pertinent to patient safety and quality of care, make him an excellent fit with our vision and culture for ensuring patient well-being, while overseeing enhancements to our service-lines and programs."



Census officials urge participation in High Desert cities where response rate is low

By Martin Estacio

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 8, 2020 at 3:08 PM

U.S. Census Bureau officials are urging local residents to take part in the 2020 census after releasing information showing that Barstow's response rate places the city near the bottom in California.

As of Thursday, the last day numbers were updated, 55.7% of Barstow residents have responded to the 2020 census, which ranked the city 428 out of the state's 482 incorporated cities, according to a Census Bureau report.

The updated figures represent a slight increase from late July when Barstow ranked 429 with a 55.3% response rate.

Meanwhile, officials said in a statement that participation in California and across the United States was "on track."

As of Thursday, 64% of California households had responded online, by phone, or by mail if they received a paper questionnaire. That percentage equated to 9.8 million households.

Nationwide, more than 63% of households have participated.

Elsewhere in the High Desert, Apple Valley ranked the highest, at 210, with a 68.6% response rate, Census Bureau figures show. Hesperia ranked 308 with 64.5%, Victorville ranked 344 with 62.6% and Adelanto ranked 375 with 60.6%.

In Big Bear Lake, which has a population of 5,281, just 15.7% of households have responded, making it the third-lowest of all cities.

San Bernardino County (60.9%) ranks near the middle among California's 58 counties.

Conducted every 10 years, the census determines the number of seats each state will receive in the House of Representatives and helps draw congressional and state legislative districts.

Census Bureau officials said response results are critical as they inform planning and funding decisions for public services, emergency and disaster response; and education programs.

The count determines how \$1.5 trillion in federal spending is distributed, according to the Associated Press.

The California Department of Finance estimates that for every person who does not respond, state and local governments will lose out on \$1,000 a year in federal funding tied to population for the next 10 years.

But many worry about the accuracy of the count, especially if those who don't respond cannot be reached physically amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

If a household does not respond, census takers will conduct an in-person interview in what's known as a non-response follow-up, or NRFU.

The period for NRFUs was scheduled to begin in mid-May and extend through July 31, but the Census Bureau later modified the dates from Aug. 11 to Oct. 31 due to the pandemic.

Then, on Aug. 3, the agency announced it would shorten the NRFU period and end field data collection on Sept. 30.

The move prompted four former Census Bureau directors to sign a letter urging that the date be extended, The New York Times reported.

"The Census Bureau will not be able to carry out the NRFU fully and will be forced to take steps such as fewer in-person visits and rely instead on the use of administrative records or statistical techniques on a much larger scale (than) in previous census," the directors wrote. "The result will be under-representation of those persons that NRFU was expected to reach and, at even greater rates for traditionally hard-to-count populations and over-representation of all other populations with potentially extreme differential undercounts."

A national committee for the State Data Center — a partnership between the Census Bureau and state and local governments — also sent a letter to Steven Dillingham, the Bureau’s director, in July.

“Planning and services to the American people for the next decade will suffer from a rushed and inaccurate 2020 Census,” wrote Robert Coats, chair of the State Data Center Steering Committee. “The credibility of the US Census Bureau as the gold standard of data in the United States will be undermined by rushing an incomplete Census count to meet release deadlines.”

Dillingham has said the agency aims to have the same level of responses as past censuses. “We will improve the speed of our count without sacrificing completeness,” he said.

As of Friday, the 2020 census’ non-response rate was 36.8%. In 2010, the Census Bureau reported that 74% of households had filled out and mailed back questionnaires, creating a non-response rate of about 26%.

Recently, the Census Bureau started sending emails to households in neighborhoods with low response rates in an attempt to urge participation. And for the first time, residents can respond online. Officials said the questionnaire takes “only a few minutes” to complete.

The statement urged those who have received a message from 2020census@subscriptions.census.gov to click on the link and respond.

“Whether you receive an email or not, if you haven’t responded, please do so today, and urge your family, friends and neighbors to respond too,” the statement said. “It’s easy, safe and important.”

The deadline for people to respond to the 2020 census is Sept. 30. For more information, visit www.2020Census.gov.

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

Follow him on Twitter @DP_mestacio.



Aurelia Fregeollie, 5, opens her arms in an air embrace of her Brilliant Dance Academy instructor during the farewell car parade Aug. 1.



Brilliant Dance Academy takes its final bow

Aug 07, 2020 1:33 PM



By Stacy Moore
Hi-Desert Star

For Lauran Callan, it felt a little like a funeral. The parade of cars marking the end of her business, Brilliant Dance Academy, the afternoon of Aug. 1 was at least a celebration of life — the life of the studio she opened almost 10 years ago, and had to close because of COVID-19.

Flakes of ash from the Apple Fire filtered down and recital music floated through the air as the line of vehicles inched through the Monterey Business Center lot, children peering out to see their instructors.

Callan said later she was surprised by how many people drove through.

“It was so heartfelt to see all the signs and posters and balloons,” she said.

“It was a really hard day but it was wonderful to see how much love people have for the studio.”

Curling her hands into heart signs, Callan leaned over a fence made of portable barres to look into the vehicles and give a final farewell.

The instructors got bouquets of flowers from many of the families, like the Sierras.

“We’re military, and they’ve been dancing everywhere we’ve lived, from Japan to Virginia,” dad Richard Sierra said.

“They really enjoyed this dance studio. It’s a shame COVID is forcing it to close.”

Brilliant Dance is one of more than 72,000 businesses in the U.S. that have permanently closed since March because of the pandemic, according to research from Yelp.

“It’s like a death in the family,” said instructor Keersten Milson. “It’s the end of something that should stay around, but you know — COVID.

Milson and her fellow teachers dashed up to the vehicles to greet students and their parents. There were selfies and in some cases hugs.

“All right, Miss, Aurelia, what do we always spread?” teacher Cassie Hogan called out to a girl in an Elsa costume.

“Kindness!” 5-year-old Aurelia Fregeolle chirped back.

The blow of closing was especially hard for Callan and her workers because before COVID, Brilliant Dance Academy was doing better than ever.

Callan, a teacher at the Desert Ballet Center, took over the business when owner Patricia Bristow died in December 2010. She reopened it as Brilliant Dance Academy in February 2011 and built it from a studio with 48 ballet students to a 300-student school where styles included ballet, jazz, tap and acrobatic dance.

Their recitals drew the largest live seated audiences in the Morongo Basin, she said, and this year she was moving from La Contenta Middle School’s auditorium to a venue in Palm Springs.

She had already booked a site for this summer’s show. And then COVID-19 hit.

‘Every week it got worse’

Like most businesses in California, the studio’s last day of in-person operations was Thursday, March 12.

It was supposed to be for just two weeks. Callan remembers writing on the lobby white board, ‘We’re closed for two weeks but classes are coming back March 30.’

She quickly realized the pandemic orders were going to last much longer.

“Within four days I knew I was going to have to take the school to online classes,” she said. “I trained all my teachers, I got a Zoom account, we did a massive registration and got everyone converted but even doing that we were only able to get 50% buy-in.”

The goal for instructors and students was to forge ahead for the summer recitals.

“Every week it got worse,” Callan recalled.

The venue canceled so they couldn't hold their recital in June. More people stopped taking the classes. The student count dropped from 300 to 150 to 65 students who were hanging on to see if they could do a summer show in August.

“Then it turned out we couldn't.”

The state placed dance studios in the same category as gyms, allowing them only to do business outside — something impossible in the desert heat.

“That was the death knell,” Callan said.

After the recital was completely canceled, even more students dropped out.

“I'm a small-business owner. I still have all my rent, payroll and utilities. I've been basically operating in the red for two months,” Callan said.

“I did get some federal help in the first two months. I even got the Yucca Valley grant, which I was so grateful for. But that ran out.”

She had to tell her six employees that the studio was closing and they'd lose their jobs.

“That was horrendous,” she recalled.

Callan, who now lives in Moro Bay and has been commuting to Yucca Valley for three years, faced the fact that her studio wouldn't survive into its 10th year.

'I hope they know that they can do anything'

Callan takes comfort in what that studio meant to her and the “dance family” she built.

“I really had a mission to have a particular loving, supportive educational style,” she said.

And while the studio is closed, she hopes her dancers keep a part of what they learned with them.

“I hope they know that they can do anything that they can put their mind to. I think they all learned to work hard, to not be afraid of hard work, and to approach anything they do with the idea that doing something hard is exciting and challenging,” she said.

“We used to always say at our school, ‘We love to do hard things,’ and I always wanted them to approach life like that.”

At the end of every show, she choreographed a performance called the Diamond Dance for all of the students.

“ All the kids would march in through the front doors and down the sides of the auditorium and go on stage and do the Diamond Dance,” she explained. “It was a celebration of ‘look what you accomplished. Take some time to enjoy that moment.’”

She hopes they remember that feeling.

“I just wanted them to think about the wonderful thing they just did.”

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California public health director abruptly resigns as state manages data snafu

By Victoria Colliver

08/10/2020 02:00 AM EDT

OAKLAND — California Public Health Director Sonia Angell resigned Sunday evening without explanation, an abrupt departure that came amid [a major data glitch affecting hundreds of thousands of Covid-19 test records](#), which has hampered counties' response to the virus.

Angell, who took over as health officer and director of the California Department of Public Health in October, did not give a reason for her departure. Officials from the state Health and Human Services Agency, which oversees the public health department, declined to elaborate.

Her resignation follows a tumultuous week for state health officials. POLITICO reported Friday that the two top state leaders managing the pandemic — Health and Human Services Secretary Mark Ghaly and Gov. Gavin Newsom — may have been left in the dark about the test problems despite Angell's department knowing about them.

Ghaly [on Friday detailed problems](#) with the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange, known as CalREDIE, that have led to a backlog of 250,000 to 300,000 records. He explained that he did not learn of the issue until Monday afternoon — after Newsom announced the state's seven-day average daily case count had dropped 21 percent, a figure that was likely overstated given the backlog.

The HHS secretary on Friday said he was looking into the apparent miscommunication both within the state HHS Agency as well as the Department of Public Health, under which the CalREDIE system operates.

In a Sunday note to her staff announcing her resignation, Angell commended her colleagues for their "expertise, commitment, passion and kindness" and said plans are in place for a smooth transition. She noted she was proud to have been the first Latina to serve as the state's health director.

Angell regularly appeared alongside Newsom to explain public health guidance, particularly early in the pandemic.

"Since January, when we got word of repatriation flights arriving from Wuhan, China, our Department has been front and center in what has become an all-of-government response of unprecedented proportions to COVID-19," Angell wrote. "Not one of our staff has gone untouched by the changes that have occurred. Not in our professional lives or our personal lives."

Sandra Shewry, who led the Department of Health Services under former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, on Monday will be appointed acting public health director, state officials said Sunday evening. She served from 2004 to 2008 — the state in 2007 split the Health Services entity into the Department of Health Care Services and Department of Public Health.

Erica Pan, the state's epidemiologist, will take over the role of acting state public health officer.

"I want to thank Dr. Angell for her service to the state and her work to help steer our public health system during this global pandemic, while never losing sight of the importance of health equity," Newsom said in a statement.

Ghaly, in a statement, said he was grateful to Angell "for her service to the people of California during this unprecedented public health crisis."

"She has worked tirelessly for all Californians, always keeping health equity in mind," Ghaly said. "Her leadership was instrumental as Californians flattened the curve once and in setting us on a path to do so again."

Before serving as director of California's health department, Angell was the former deputy commissioner for prevention and primary care at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

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Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

California's public health director resigns amid questions about coronavirus test data



Dr. Sonia Angell, former director of the California Department of Public Health, during an April news conference. On Sunday, she resigned from the administration of Gov. Gavin Newsom. (Associated Press)

By JOHN MYERS | SACRAMENTO BUREAU CHIEF

AUG. 9, 2020 | 10:58 PM

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom’s director of the California Department of Public Health resigned on Sunday, an abrupt departure of a key advisor in the state’s coronavirus battle just [days after the discovery of a computer system failure that resulted in the undercounting of COVID-19 cases.](#)

Dr. Sonia Angell, who held the position for less than a year, announced her resignation in an email sent to department staff that was released by the California Health and Human Services Agency.

“Since January, when we got word of repatriation flights arriving from Wuhan, China, our department has been front and center in what has become an all-of-government

response of unprecedented proportions to COVID-19," Angell wrote in the email to public health staff members. "In the final calculation, all of our work, in aggregate, makes the difference."

Angell's decision to step aside comes at a crucial moment in California's battle against the spread of the virus. More than 10,000 Californians have died from the disease and 38 of the state's 58 counties are on a watchlist that has required the closure of businesses that had briefly reopened in the early summer and K-12 schools as the academic year begins. Angell, who frequently has appeared alongside Newsom in his public briefings on the state's efforts to combat the pandemic, was considered a key player in the coordination with local public health departments across the state.

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"I want to thank Dr. Angell for her service to the state and her work to help steer our public health system during this global pandemic, while never losing sight of the importance of health equity," the governor said in a written statement Sunday night.

Last week, state officials confirmed that as many as 300,000 records had not been processed by the computer clearinghouse system relied upon to provide to local officials the COVID-19 test results reported by labs on a daily basis. Two separate errors were

identified — one related to a computer server outage, the other to the expiration of an electronic certificate for data to be transferred from Quest Laboratories.

Administration officials insisted they did not know the extent of the problem until after Newsom's public event on Aug. 3 in which he expressed optimism that current case numbers — lower than some had expected — meant some progress in the state's efforts. But some local officials were sent communications the week before from the state Department of Public Health acknowledging a problem with the CalREDIE computer system.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, the secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, said on Friday that a full investigation was underway to determine what happened. And although he said that he had become aware of the "magnitude" of the problem only after Newsom's public statements, some state officials had information on the problem earlier.

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By Mazda

The 2020 Mazda CX-5 is truly in a class of its own. Check out the full review on Car and Driver.

"We are aware that individuals there were knowledgeable of some of these challenges," Ghaly said in discussing both the state Public Health Department and his agency, which oversees those operations.

A spokeswoman for the state health agency would not comment Sunday on whether Angell's sudden resignation was related to, or prompted by, the database errors.

"I am grateful to Dr. Angell for her service to the people of California during this unprecedented public health crisis," Ghaly said in a written statement Sunday night. "She

has worked tirelessly for all Californians, always keeping health equity in mind. Her leadership was instrumental as Californians flattened the curve once and in setting us on a path to do so again.”

Angell served both as the director of the state Department of Public Health and as the state’s public health officer. Those duties will now be split between two women, state officials said. Sandra Shewry, a vice president at the nonprofit California Health Care Foundation who oversaw the state’s Medi-Cal program under then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, will serve as acting director of the Department of Public Health. Dr. Erica Pan, recently brought into the Newsom administration after serving as public health officer in Alameda County, will take over as acting state public health officer.

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Newsom is expected to provide an update on the state’s coronavirus efforts Monday afternoon.

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California told counties about data flaw before Newsom, Ghaly apparently knew

By Victoria Colliver

08/07/2020 11:13 PM EDT

OAKLAND — The California Department of Public Health at least twice informed county officials about Covid-19 data collection problems before the state's top health officer says he knew about the issue, according to emails obtained by POLITICO.

The state sent the alerts to county health offices on July 31 and again on Monday — an hour before Gov. Gavin Newsom touted a 21 percent drop in daily cases during his noon press conference, a figure that has since been deemed a likely undercount.

Local health officials provided POLITICO with two emailed messages from the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange, known as CalREDIE, about technical problems that hampered its ability to provide accurate testing data.

In [an email dated July 31](#), state health officials refer to a “processing issue” that they had notified CalREDIE users about earlier in the week that they were still trying to resolve. In a [followup email](#), received at 11:05 a.m. on Monday, CalREDIE officials referenced the July 31 notification and assured counties that they were working to resolve the problems and had “urgently escalated this issue to leadership.”

Health and Human Services Secretary Mark Ghaly on Friday [detailed the problems](#) that have led to a backlog of 250,000 to 300,000 records. He explained that he did not learn of the issue until Monday afternoon — after the governor announced what looked like positive signs for the state's recovery.

When asked about the timing during [a press briefing](#) Friday, Ghaly said he was looking into the “communication of this issue” both within the state Health and Human Services Agency as well as the California Department of Public Health.

“We are aware that individuals there were knowledgeable of some of these challenges, and we are doing a complete look into how that communication both could have been better and where it went wrong,” he said.

His office did not elaborate further Friday afternoon when asked why Ghaly wasn't aware of the alerts being sent to counties by his public health department.

Ghaly blamed the data collection problems on a server outage that started July 25, and the inability to get data from Quest Diagnostics for five days. He said the state is developing a new tracking system for Covid-19 because the current system is not able to handle the volume.

It is not yet clear to what extent the undercount would have affected Newsom's 21 percent case drop figure. Ghaly said Friday he believes the general trend holds based on declining hospitalizations and other data.

County health officials [have been frustrated by the glitch](#), which they say has made it difficult to determine case trends and has affected whether counties can allow certain sectors to move forward.

Riverside County was concerned enough Monday afternoon that it told residents that its data was being undercounted and told residents not to ease up on any precautions.

“It’s critical the public has confidence we are providing them with the most accurate information,” Jose Arballo, spokesperson for the Riverside County Department of Public Health. “Whenever we have a situation where there are some questions about the numbers we provide, that hurts our ability to get the message out that’s needed for them to protect themselves.”

Arballo said the county continues to work in partnership with the state.

“At the point where the information lag was discovered, they have been transparent, as far as we know,” Arballo said. “We have been confident as we move forward we can provide the community with accurate information.”

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Los Angeles Times

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CALIFORNIA

California to towns defying the COVID-19 shutdown: No cash for you



Randy Romero, one of few people wearing a mask, says the pledge of allegiance at an Atwater City Council meeting in May. The city declared itself a "sanctuary city" in defiance of the state's stay-at-home orders. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

By [HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 8, 2020 | 5 AM

It was a boast heard around this Central Valley town of 30,000, courtesy of Mayor Paul Creighton.

Atwater had not just flattened the COVID-19 case curve. “We’ve smashed the curve,” he declared.

With just 12 confirmed cases, the City Council in mid-May declared Atwater a [“sanctuary city” for business](#), allowing all businesses to reopen in defiance of California’s shutdown orders.

How times have changed.

Cases have surged past 800 in Atwater. Merced County is on the state’s coronavirus watch list. And federal officials have declared the rural, agricultural Central Valley one of the nation’s [most worrisome hot spots](#) for the spread of the virus.

What has not changed is Atwater’s defiance. City leaders refuse to rescind the sanctuary city resolution — despite the state’s withholding federal emergency coronavirus relief funds because of it.

“They have tried to put a gun to our heads to make us fold,” Creighton said at a recent City Council meeting. “They want our citizens to feel scared and vulnerable. Don’t be. They want to increase political heat or we become the next victim in a long line of victims in today’s cancel culture.”

Unless Atwater scraps its sanctuary city resolution, the state will withhold up to \$387,428 for which the city is eligible because it is violating state public health rules, the Governor’s

Office of Emergency Services told city leaders late last month.

The state has already withheld the Atwater's first allocation of \$64,833, said Brian Ferguson, a spokesman for the state emergency services agency.

"Any municipality that takes actions that endanger the health and welfare of its citizens, the state is going to take a close look at," Ferguson told The Times.

The tussle comes as COVID-19 cases have exploded in Merced County. The county had 5,012 confirmed cases as of Friday. On June 6, it had just 343 cases. Atwater had 831 confirmed cases as of Friday. On June 6, it had confirmed 32 cases.

Atwater has more coronavirus cases per capita than Merced county's two largest cities, Merced (population 83,000) and Los Banos (population 40,000), according to a Times analysis. Despite being home to 10.6% of the county's population, the city has about 16.6% of known infections in the county.

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While California's second surge of coronavirus this summer is showing signs of stabilization, the increased spread in the Central Valley are a source of deep worry among physicians and public health officials.

"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.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has identified the Central Valley as [a region in great need](#) of resources to slow the spread of the virus. He is sending "strike teams" of state, federal and local personnel there and asked state lawmakers to approve \$52 million to improve testing, tracing and isolation protocols in eight counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare, and Kern.

Newsom's decision to target the Central Valley coincides with his funding standoff with Atwater and Coalinga, a city of 16,000 in Fresno County.

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On July 23, Mark Ghilarducci, director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, sent

letters to the city managers of Atwater and Coalinga, which passed a resolution in May declaring all businesses to be essential.

Coalinga's share of the federal funds, Ghilarducci wrote, would have been up to \$212,358. The state has already blocked the first allocation of some \$36,000.

"In order to be eligible for funding, assuming it meets the other prescribed criteria, the city would need to rescind this resolution," Ghilarducci wrote to both cities.

The state says the cities are violating rules [that govern the distribution](#) of \$1.8 billion allocated to California through the federal CARES Act. California's largest communities received money directly from the federal government — a total of \$5.8 billion to counties and cities with populations over 500,000 — while the state budget includes a detailed plan to help less-populated areas.

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Neither Atwater nor Coalinga will budge.

Coalinga City Manager Marissa Trejo said that, after receiving the letter, she invited state officials to participate in a special City Council meeting via Zoom to discuss rescinding the resolution. They declined. The City Council voted to reaffirm it.

In emails that she shared with The Times, Trejo told Office of Emergency Services officials that Coalinga was "being held to a higher standard" than other cities in order to receive the funds. Other cities might not have resolutions, she wrote, but "they are not enforcing" state health orders.

"To be honest," she wrote, "I am not aware of any businesses in Coalinga operating against the existing orders. There is nowhere in Coalinga that I can dine in. None of our restaurants are even offering outdoor dining. I have not seen a single hair salon, barbershop or nail salon open."

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In Atwater, the politically potent "sanctuary city" label won support from officials across the U.S. and quickly landed Creighton on "Fox & Friends," where he called state lockdown orders "draconian." But it also provoked anger among some residents who called it political grandstanding.

Despite its defiance, the city last week posted [on its Facebook page](#) photos of municipal employees covering their faces and wearing matching T-shirts that said, “Mask Up Atwater.”

At a raucous City Council meeting last week, members of the Freedom Angels Foundation — best known for their anti-vaccine activism — rallied outside City Hall in support of the sanctuary city resolution. In a Facebook video beforehand, the group’s co-founders said Creighton had reached out to them and asked them to show up and “wear red as a sign of solidarity.”

At the meeting, officials — including the city manager, two council members and the police chief — who were not publicly covering their faces around the time the resolution was passed, wore masks at times. Creighton took his off while he was on the dais.

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Resident Mary McWatters said she was baffled the financially strapped city was willing to lose emergency funds.

“Mr. Creighton, you believe that your constituents and Donald Trump are on your side,” she said. “Well, Donald Trump is not going to bail this city out.”

Resident Theron Sanders Sr., wearing a star-spangled bandanna around his neck, said he masked up in public to keep mom-and-pop businesses in compliance with safety rules and, therefore, open. He wanted the sanctuary city resolution left in place.

“We need our economy to be able to continue to grow,” he said. “We need to be able to stay open. ... I believe this ‘plandemic’ is entirely designed to not only bring down our economy but to destroy our president.”

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The shutdowns walloped Atwater just as it was starting to claw back from the Great Recession. Last year, the [state auditor ranked](#) Atwater the second-most financially distressed city in the state, behind Compton.

Creighton said the city has since balanced its budget and did not count on getting state or federal help anyway.

Newsom, he told The Times, is “just downright bullying” his city. Creighton said he was

only trying to help small businesses devastated by the shutdown orders, which allowed chain retailers such as Walmart and Target to stay open, with varied compliance with safety rules.

Among the facilities in Merced County with an active COVID-19 outbreak is the Walmart Supercenter in Atwater, according to the county.

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“The only thing we did with the sanctuary city is allow businesses to open up,” Creighton said. “We still socially distance. We still wear masks. We still do good hygiene. ... It seems like we’re arbitrarily being picked on.”

Times staff writer Sean Greene contributed to this report.

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Hailey Branson-Potts is a Metro reporter for the Los Angeles Times who joined the newspaper in 2011. She grew up in the small town of Perry, Okla., and graduated from the University of Oklahoma.

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In California, It Will Take More Than a Parade to Save an Imperiled Census

Many Latinos in low-income communities say they are hearing a message about the 2020 census: Your participation is not wanted.



By Miriam Jordan

Aug. 9, 2020

PERRIS, Calif. — For one day at least, as a 10-car parade of vehicles with honking horns, pompoms and signs reading “Get Counted” crawled through this predominantly Latino agricultural town about 70 miles east of Los Angeles on Friday, it was hard to forget that the 2020 census was going on and that it mattered.

Daniel Cordero, 63, a Mexican immigrant who shares a home with 15 people, including his wife, children and grandchildren, was just the kind of person that the event, billed as “Get Out the Count,” was intended to reach.

But as he stepped out of his kitchenware store on D Street in downtown Perris on Friday to observe the parade, he wasn’t quite sold. “We’re working so hard, we don’t have time to be filling out questionnaires,” he said.

“I haven’t filled it out,” he added. “I have never filled it out.” He took a flier from one of the volunteers, examining it like one of his customers contemplating his wares, and said that he might consider it. “It’d be the first time,” he said without much enthusiasm, before returning to work in his store stocked with pots, pans, brooms and other household items.

It has always been a challenge to get an accurate count of people in places like this dusty working-class town of 80,000 people, where about three quarters of the population is Hispanic, many of them immigrants. Throw in a pandemic and a cascade of messages from President Trump making many Latinos wary of the census, and the challenge grows exponentially.

But when the Census Bureau on Monday said it would lop off four weeks from the 10 it had allocated for a door-to-door count of the hardest to reach communities, the move added a new sense of urgency to efforts to reach farmworkers and undocumented immigrants in Perris as well as other communities with different challenges around the country. The situation is likely to be even worse in communities and states where there is less government involvement in the census and fewer organizations on the ground to press for participation.

“We have to keep dodging bullets to reach our community, and now we have limited time,” said Luz Gallegos, the director of TODEC Legal Center, an immigrant services provider that operates in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. “We are going to continue to push until the deadline.”

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The Census Bureau announced on Monday that it will halt counting on Sept. 30, four weeks earlier than planned, cutting short door-knocking, which begins nationwide on Aug. 11, and the time people have to submit responses online, over the phone and by mail.

In March, the Census Bureau sent out invitations by mail to people across the country asking them to respond to the 2020 census. Next week, after a delay in outreach because of the coronavirus, census workers will start knocking on doors of homes whose residents have not yet participated.

The numbers are enormously important, especially in a poor community in need of all available federal resources. The count is used to reapportion all 435 House seats and thousands of state and local districts, as well as to divvy up trillions of dollars in federal grants and aid.

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Census officials say they can still do an accurate count with the new deadline. “We will be hiring more people to knock on those doors so we can get to all of the households that haven’t responded yet,” a Census Bureau spokeswoman said. “Our recruiting pool, which is very large, puts us in a good position to do this.”

But experts are skeptical.

“We will have a flawed census that will be fatal to certain groups,” said Paul Ong, a researcher at U.C.L.A.’s Luskin School of Public Affairs who studies census participation and has served as an adviser to the Census Bureau.

Despite an unprecedented \$187 million investment in outreach by the state and nonprofits in California, residents of Latino communities have been responding at lower rates than in 2010. Nationally, the trend is the same.



Volunteers handed out flyers in downtown Perris, a largely Latino community, where many people are wary of participating in the census. Christian Monterrosa for The New York Times

In some census tracts in far-flung areas of Riverside County, the response rate is hovering between 40 and 50 percent, about 10 percentage points behind the response rate a decade ago.

Even before the coronavirus hit, the census faced extraordinary challenges.

The Constitution requires a count of all residents, regardless of nationality or immigration status. California is home to almost 11 million immigrants, including about two million who are undocumented.

But President Trump pushed for 19 months, starting in 2018, to include a citizenship question on the decennial census, despite widespread criticism that it would dramatically depress responses, particularly from Latino immigrants. After the Supreme Court opposed the plan last year, Mr. Trump backed down.

Then last month he directed the government not to count undocumented immigrants for the purposes of reapportioning congressional seats. His policy memorandum would have the Census Bureau remove the immigrants from each state’s count using data estimates. While the move is being challenged in court, it has sown confusion anew in immigrant communities.

For many immigrants, documented and undocumented, his repeated insistence on not counting undocumented people has sent what seemed like a clear message: Your participation is not wanted.

Liz and Daniel Rivera, undocumented Mexicans who have lived in Riverside County for 18 years, were too nervous to fill out the 2010 census, they said. But this year, after attending workshops at TODEC, they were persuaded to fill out the form.

“We understood that it was safe and that it was important to participate if we want funding to improve our schools, parks and roads,” said Ms. Rivera, who said that she shared the information with friends and family.

But the couple delayed completing the online form after they, their two children and Ms. Rivera’s father, who is living with them, fell ill with Covid-19. While at home, they heard about Mr. Trump’s new presidential order to exclude undocumented immigrants from the count.

“We were so confused. We thought we weren’t supposed to participate anymore,” Ms. Rivera recalled.

She decided to call TODEC to inquire, just to be sure, and a staff member assured her that the Rivera household still had every right to take part. The couple plan to fill out the form next week.

Maria and Ramon Garcia, who have lived in the United States for two decades, said they had intended to complete the census until Mr. Trump's recent announcement. Now they fear that participating could land them in the cross hairs of immigration enforcement.

"We were told that we should be counted," said Mrs. Garcia, 50. "But then, just recently, we heard that the president doesn't want us to be counted, and we're worried that we could be deported if we participate."

The Garcias called TODEC's hotline on Friday to seek the legal center's advice but could not be convinced that participating was safe.

"We came here from Mexico many years ago. We pay taxes, we work hard and we don't want to put that in jeopardy," said Mr. Garcia, 57, who has a gardening business with his wife. "I don't think we should participate in the census."

Adán Chávez, deputy director of the national census program at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, said that reaction was widespread.

"We have had to contend with challenge after challenge, attack after attack that threatens our census work," he said.

The Coronavirus Outbreak >

Frequently Asked Questions

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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The group has responded by intensifying its "¡Hagase Contar!" ("Be Counted") campaign, working with Spanish-language television to promote participation and calls to a hotline that answers questions and helps people complete the census in Spanish.

"Our lift was already much heavier in the middle of a pandemic," Mr. Chávez said. "Now we're having to tell people that everyone gets counted, it's your right. Don't worry."

According to an analysis of census data to be released next week by Mr. Ong's team, the estimated median response rate for Hispanics nationwide was 50 percent by August, down by nearly 13 percentage points from 2010. Among non-Hispanic whites, the estimated response rate was 69 percent, compared with 71 percent a decade ago.

States with large undocumented populations — California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey and Illinois — stand to lose the most from an undercount.

TODEC volunteers began last year to go door-to-door in hard-to-count neighborhoods, in the rural reaches of Riverside County, to educate immigrants about the census. They erected booths at health fairs and hosted information sessions to educate people about the census.

But like other groups working in the field, it was forced to shift strategy — to phone banking, social media and Zoom info sessions in March, when the coronavirus began coursing through California.

On a Zoom call last Thursday titled, "The Census and My Community," which was also streamed on Facebook, TODEC staff and a Census Bureau representative spent a full hour trying to motivate Latinos to participate.

"If we respond, our community will get money. But if we aren't counted, it's as if we don't exist," said Lupe Camacho, the bureau's representative.

She appealed to their commonality as immigrants. "I'm from Mexico," said Ms. Camacho, who spoke in Spanish throughout the session. "I'm a naturalized citizen. But citizenship has nothing to do with this."

During the session, she described the census as "pure statistics," "completely confidential" and "posing no danger," all but pleading for participation.

"We don't pass on any information about anyone — not to the DMV, not to ICE, not to any city, state or federal authority," she said, referring to the department of motor vehicles and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.



Maria Estela Perez Gomez, 55 danced with volunteers on Friday after she said she had already participated in the 2020 census. Christian Monterrosa for The New York Times

In Perris, there were bright moments as well as cautionary ones.

Maria Estela Perez Gomez, 55, emerged from her beige house at the sight of the caravan. “We filled out our census form,” she said excitedly, doing a little dance as a Mexican band that was part of the parade and procession played.

The hurdles have also motivated some people.

Montserrat Gomez, a 19-year-old college student, said the decision to curtail the count was one reason she joined the group of young adults, mostly children of immigrants, who marched through downtown Perris on Friday waving signs and distributing fliers.

“We need to convince them that they need to be counted so that the community receives the political representation and financial resources that it deserves,” she said. “And now we have less time to do it.”



LOCAL NEWS • News

Riverside County lost at least 100,500 jobs due to coronavirus, study concludes



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

PUBLISHED: August 9, 2020 at 7:00 a.m. | UPDATED: August 9, 2020 at 7:00 a.m.



Riverside County lost more than 100,000 jobs at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, and the prospects of an economic rebound are grim if the virus isn't controlled, a new study found.

Conducted by Claremont McKenna College, the 11-page study presented to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Aug. 4, offers a detailed look at the pandemic's toll on the county economy.

Like the rest of the nation, the local economy has been ravaged by a virus that prompted a statewide stay-at-home order to limit its spread. COVID-19 concerns led to the postponement and eventual cancellation of this year's Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival and Stagecoach Country Music

Festival in Indio, annual events that bring close to 300,000 visitors and \$450 million in economic activity, according to the study, which was commissioned by the county and Inland Empire Economic Partnership.

Assuming pre-pandemic trends, the county's economy was set to grow by \$2 billion to \$95 billion this year, the study found. Instead, the county lost \$1.033 billion in March and April, the study read.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



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Public Health Director says coronavirus cases in NDAs [READ MORE](#)

“In a growing economy such as the county’s, the economic ‘hole’ created by the shutdown is more than the \$1 billion lost during the shutdown, because you should also account for the \$2 billion in trend growth that would have occurred in 2020 in the absence of the pandemic shutdown,” the study read.

“Roughly speaking, it might take 18 months to recover \$3 billion in lost output.”

The county, which had a 14.8% unemployment rate in June according to the state — it was 4.2% in June 2019 — lost 100,500 jobs in March and April, the study found.

The lost jobs include:

- 44,370 in leisure and hospitality
- 15,820 in retail
- 10,730 in health and education
- 8,520 in business and professional services
- 5,530 in businesses such as hair and nail salons that were forced to shut down.

It will likely take years for the economy to bounce back, said the study's authors, economists Manfred W. Keil and Robert A. Kleinhenz.

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“In 2019, Riverside County added 19,200 jobs, a 2.6% increase over 2018,” the study read. “If recovery from the pandemic proceeded at that pace, it would take 5 years to recover the 100,500 jobs lost in the two-month shutdown period!”

The rate of recovery depends on containing the virus and the public's cooperation with virus-fighting practices, the study concluded.

“One message must be clear: there is no trade-off between fighting the virus (until there is a vaccine) and a functioning economy,” the study read. “Rather, fighting the virus is a prerequisite for returning the economy to a new normal.”

Religious leaders gathered in downtown San Diego to protest the closure of worship centers, which they call a violation of constitutional rights

By LAURYN SCHROEDER

AUG. 9, 2020 | 8:45 PM



SAN DIEGO — “Let my people go.”

That was a repeated refrain offered from religious speakers and hundreds of worshippers who gathered Sunday on the steps of the County Administration Center in downtown San Diego to protest the continued closure of indoor religious gatherings across the country.

As COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths increased in recent weeks, Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered California churches, as well as gyms, salons and other businesses, to cease all indoor operations.

Art Hodges III, Senior Pastor of South Bay United Pentecostal Church, who coordinated the rally and prayer service, said the government has attacked the churches of America by forcing them to close amid the coronavirus pandemic.



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RELIGION

Hundreds gather to worship, protest closure of churches amid pandemic



Susana Braxton prays along with other worshippers during the National Day of Prayer for Religious Liberty in front of the County Administration Center in downtown San Diego on Sunday. (Sandy Huffaker/SDUT)



Hundreds gathered in San Diego for the National Day of Prayer for Religious Liberty Sunday. (Sandy Huffaker/SDUT)

“We are here today to declare publicly, Gov. (Gavin) Newsom, it’s time to let all God’s children go,” Hodges said at the event. “It’s time to let all God’s children go back to church.”

For Brenda Valencia, of Chula Vista, getting back to church is a top priority. She said even with online prayer services and small bible studies offered through her church, not having a weekly gathering of her friends and church members has been devastating for her and her family.

“It’s just not the same,” Valencia said. “I don’t think we were created to be alone or stand alone, especially during a pandemic. There’s power in unity and not having that unity has been devastating.”

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Worshippers prayed during the National Day of Prayer for Religious Liberty in front of the County Administration Center on Sunday. (Sandy Huffaker/SDUT)

Deborah Doyle, who attended the event with her husband Wayne, echoed that sentiment. She said the economic shutdown has been isolating, and not being able to go to church has made that isolation worse.

“I have two elderly parents who I’m not able to see as much,” Doyle said, as she held a large American flag in her hand. “You can’t see any of your friends, any of your friends at church. Prayer has helped and we have a good community of neighbors, but it’s isolating and it’s not the same.”

According to Hodges, similar prayer and protest rallies were held across the country Sunday afternoon, because the closure of churches is not just a moral issue — it’s a constitutional one.

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“America was founded so we could worship the God we want without persecution, without interference from our government,” he said prior to the event. “Ironically, in America, that is being tested like never before.”

Hodges’ church sued Gov. Newsom in May after the first round of shutdowns, which banned all indoor services for places of worship. They lost their first Supreme Court case, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals will hear an amended complaint against the state’s restrictions this week.

“We’re confident that when the court hears our entire full case, we will be vindicated,” said Hodges, who as bishop oversees more than 100 churches and 235 pastors throughout California. “We feel that the court will say ‘Gov. Newsom, you’re out of bound here. You don’t have the authority to restrict our freedom to worship.’”

The state in June allowed churches to reopen with modifications and restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has infected 32,330 and killed 593 people in San Diego County.

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Hodges said at that time, the South Bay Pentecostal Church went above and beyond the state’s guidelines and implemented several methods to keep worshipers safe.

All worshipers were required to RSVP for the Sunday services online and complete a series of questions prior to attending. Upon arrival, they were asked additional questions at the door and were required to take their temperature. Masks are worn at all times and all attendees must sit at least six feet apart, unless they are from the same family or household.

“We call it the safest place in town,” Hodges said. “We don’t know of a single person who has become infected or tested positive from our services. We don’t want to be anyone’s excuse for more restrictions.”

But in July, as many counties began opening up businesses, restaurants and churches, the state saw a resurgence of cases and hospitalizations, and Gov. Newsom announced additional statewide restrictions that forced churches, along with indoor malls, bars and gyms, to close immediately and remain closed indefinitely.

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Hodges said the move is draconian, discriminatory against churches, and a violation of the constitution.

“I know they’re all trying to do the best they can, but nothing, even a pandemic, gives you the right to aggregate our freedom of religion,” he said. “It’s forcing people to choose between following God’s law and man’s law.”

Ann Matchinske, of San Diego, said she doesn’t categorize herself as a “church person” but is a strong supporter of the U.S. Constitution. Her and her husband frequently carry around pocketbook-sized copies of the constitution to give out to friends, or leave a copy — in addition to a tip — when paying a restaurant bill.

She said she attends church and has been meeting with small groups of people for worship, but it was more important for her to come to the event to support the group’s desire to gather and worship.

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“The government is overreaching,” Matchinske said. “The government is trying to play God, instead of looking to God, and I don’t like that. A lot of people don’t.”

Most of the crowd at the event wore masks, although some did not. They waved American flags, or held signs that said “open California,” “stand for religious freedoms” and “recall Newsom.” Politics played a role as well, with attendees donning shirts and

hats in support of President Donald Trump or Juan Hildalgo Jr., a Republican candidate for the 51st Congressional District.

Richard Busch, who drove from Dana Point in Orange County for the event, was there to help attendees register to vote for the upcoming election and sign a petition against the governor.

“I think people are fed up, fed up that we’re being herded like cattle,” he said. “The church is rising up and saying they’re not going to take it.”

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In addition to Hodges, speakers at the event included Pastor Michael Gonzales, of the Plymouth Congregational Church in San Diego; Pastor Dennis Hodges, from The Church of Yeshua Ha Mashiach in Lemon Grove; Rabbi Michael Leo Samuel, a leader of the Temple Beth Shalom in Chula Vista; and Pastor Rocky Martinez, from the Life Christian Center in Chula Vista.

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CALIFORNIA

L.A. County coronavirus hospitalizations continue to decline



L.A. County Department of Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

By [ALEX WIGGLESWORTH](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 8, 2020 | 4:09 PM

Los Angeles County public health officials on Saturday reported 2,645 new cases of the coronavirus and 51 related deaths but said hospitalizations continue to decline.

The latest case numbers did not include a pending backlog of lab reports the county is expecting the state to send via its electronic reporting system over the next couple of days, officials said. It's not clear whether that will change the overall picture of how rapidly the virus continues to spread.

Still, officials said, death and hospitalization statistics were not affected by [the reporting glitch, which has rendered new case numbers inaccurate](#).

On Friday, there were 1,568 confirmed COVID-19 cases in county hospitals; the number topped 2,000 for much of July. The most recent three-day average number of hospitalizations represented a decline of 5.2%, according to [the L.A. Times coronavirus tracker](#).

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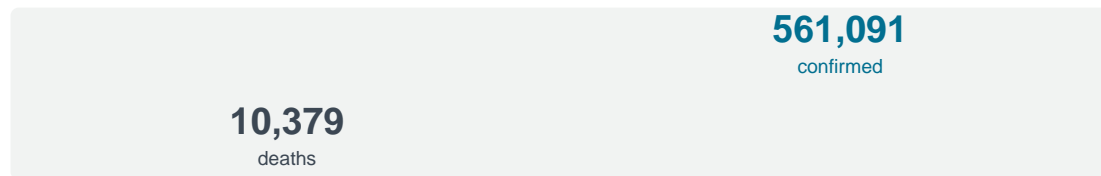
L.A. County has now tallied 206,778 cases and 4,967 deaths.

"After a fairly rough July, we are cautiously optimistic about what our numbers are

showing in the first week of August, particularly the information on declining daily hospitalizations," Barbara Ferrer, the county health director, said in a statement.

Coronavirus cases statewide »

As of August 9, 10:17 p.m. Pacific



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

"As we look to the future and continue planning our recovery, the lessons from our recent past serve as a reminder that we need to continue our vigilance in the face of this still new and dangerous virus."

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Ferrer said this will require many more weeks of putting activities on hold, avoiding parties and crowded situations, wearing face coverings in public and keeping six feet apart from others.

Orange County reported a similar drop in hospitalizations, with a total of 491 confirmed COVID-19 patients and [a three-day average that represented a 5.1% decline](#). The county added 322 cases and 16 deaths Saturday, bringing its total to 39,076 cases and 720 deaths.

California [has reported 554,389 cases and 10,307 deaths](#) statewide.

Officials have cautioned that the number of cases, including those reported by individual

counties, could be artificially low due to glitches in the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange electronic database.

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Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's health and human services director, said Friday [that between 250,000 and 300,000 results have not been uploaded to the database](#). It's not clear if the lost test results are scattered throughout the state or contained to a small number of counties.

CALIFORNIA

California to towns defying the COVID-19 shutdown: No cash for you

Aug. 8, 2020

The issue has affected L.A. County's efforts at contact tracing, and officials on Saturday renewed their plea for any resident who has tested positive to call 1-833-540-0473 to speak to a public health specialist.

Times staff writer Taryn Luna contributed to this report.

[CALIFORNIA](#) [COVID-19 PANDEMIC](#)

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NEWS • News

Questions, answers about upcoming school year, distance learning

Online education is the norm in Southern California. So is confusion.



Students got a taste of distance learning at the end of the 2019-20 school year, and some educators hope that will help make the start of the next school year a little smoother. (Photo by Jeff Gritchen, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **ANDRE MOUCHARD** | amouchard@scng.com | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: August 9, 2020 at 7:00 a.m. | UPDATED: August 9, 2020 at 9:57 a.m.

Public education is kicking back into gear this month, but for most students in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties the phrase “back to school” will be a euphemism. Throughout the region, distance learning and closed classrooms will be the norms until health conditions improve.

With that in mind, here’s a brief guide to some of the questions parents and students might have about the upcoming school year.

Q: Can my kid go to school?

Probably not, at least not yet. The state is requiring online-only instruction until the pandemic slows in counties that are on the state watch list. Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties are all on that list.

There is a limited exception. On Monday, Aug. 3, the state issued rules for a waiver process that could let some elementary schools reopen. But that process gives county health officials final say on the matter and sets health standards that must be met. As of now, in the four-county region, only Orange County might permit some schools to open, though none so far have qualified.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



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Q: Why are we doing this?

The online-only mandate was implemented for health reasons.

“Unfortunately, Covid-19 continues to spread in the Los Angeles area and the virus is going to impact

how we start the new school year,” wrote Austin Beutner, superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District, to explain why the nation’s second-biggest school district is starting the year online.

It’s not ideal. Most teachers, administrators and parents (of all political leanings) seem to want traditional education to resume. And studies consistently show that for most students online instruction typically isn’t as effective as traditional schooling.

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As school starts, anxiety and excitement build for Online 2.0

But in any face-to-face school setting – even if temperature checks and social distancing rules are enforced – students interact daily with a lot of people; other students, teachers, school staff, parents. And data shows that more contacts in schools mean more COVID in the community.

Q: When can traditional school resume?

Schools under the online-only mandate can’t reopen traditional instruction until their county has been off the state watch list for 14 consecutive days.

Q: Online school last spring wasn’t great. Will it be different now?

Yes. The state issued rules for the coming school year aimed at adding rigor to online instruction, including some rules for teachers and students that mirror traditional schooling.

For example, state law is reviving basic daily instruction limits. This year, that means 180 minutes of instruction time every day for kindergartners, 230 minutes for grades 1 through 3 and 240 minutes a day for grades 4 through 12.

The state also is reviving attendance rules, though it is letting districts work with parents to work out

the details.

Also, for families who lack computers or WiFi access, online education wasn't technically feasible last academic year. In fact, the state estimated that 700,000 more computers and 300,000 WiFi hotspots were needed to make sure every student in the state could attend online school this year. Officials set aside \$5.3 billion to bridge that gap, and districts throughout the region have been tapping that money to get equipment to families who need it. (On Aug. 5 the state Department of Education said about one in nine students in California still need at least some new technology to participate in online school.)

Other new rules call for schools to offer some form of daily interaction with students and parents. When schools closed in the spring and online classes kicked in, many parents expressed frustration because it was tough to stay in touch with teachers.

Q: Will teachers issue grades?

They can.

The state says it's up to each school district to determine how to handle grading. If grades are issued, the standards have to be equitable for all students and they have to reflect the curriculum that's actually covered during this unusual year.

Q: What's the deal with academic testing?

This year, it's unclear if the state will require schools to conduct standardized testing to measure school performance. But tests that measure individual achievement – Advanced Placement, SAT and ACT – are being offered. All have been modified to reflect the rules of social distancing, including in some cases versions of the tests that can be taken remotely.

What's less clear is the ongoing relevance of those tests.

Many colleges and universities still issue college credit to students who pass AP tests, or at least let a passing AP score substitute for introductory college-level coursework. Likewise, many schools still look at SAT and ACT scores as part of the admission process.

But that's evolving. The state's two big university systems, the University of California and California State University, said they won't look at SAT or ACT tests for the class of 2021. And, recently, the UC system said it plans to develop its own standardized tests by 2025.

Q: Will students learn much this year?

Yes, but expectations should reflect the circumstances.

There are advantages and disadvantages to in-class and online learning, and individual students can thrive in either context. But experts say online-only instruction generally isn't as effective as in-class schooling when it comes to reaching the most students.

A 2017 report from the Brookings Institution found online students generally don't do as well as their in-class peers on assessment tests and other measures of education. Worse, the report found that the online education experience "impacts performance in future classes and likelihood of dropping out of college."

That said, other studies show that online instruction can work well when it's a supplement to time spent in class, and 'blended' schooling can be as effective as full-time, face-to-face instruction.

Q: What's the glitch with online education?

Distractions. Essentially, the multi-task tools that are offered on any laptop or smart pad – and the easy-to-distract nature of young human beings – make it too easy for students to tune out information that's presented online.

A 2019 study from Kent State, which surveyed 452 undergraduates at public universities found that online students demonstrated "significantly greater multitasking behavior" than their in-a-classroom peers. As teachers presented information online, their students were inclined to text and send email, watch video and listen to music, and talk to others on the phone, among other things.

Q: How big is the gap between online learning and face-to-face learning?

It's hard to measure precisely, but an estimate by experts at Brown University says students were set back significantly by the switch to online-only instruction that started last March. Specifically, the report found most learned less than half the math and only about 70% of the language skills they would have picked up in a traditional school year. The problem was worse for young students and particularly acute for students in single-parent and economically challenged households, and for students who are learning English.

Q: How can a student learn the most online?

Lose the distractions. Be organized. Set aside time that's devoted solely to communicating with the

teacher.

In short, the same skills that help students succeed in a traditional classroom also work for online school. The difference is that much of that concentration has to come at home, without the physical oversight of a teacher.

Q: How can parents help their student during online school?

Know what's expected of your student and track their progress daily.

You can start by using your school's online parent portal and finding out your teacher's short-term and long-term goals for the class and each student. Also, don't miss any opportunity you have to chat with the teacher directly. In a setting where students and parents are isolated from other students and parents, there's less wiggle room for uncertainty.

On that note, don't be totally isolated. Use the internet and phone to create study groups for your student and discussion groups for parents. If many of you have the same questions, bring them up with the teacher or the school.

Also, make sure your student has the tech and WiFi access needed to stay in class every day. That includes a distraction-free work environment, clear of everything from TV shows and siblings to chatter from any adults in the house. Treat online school time for what it is: school time. You wouldn't interrupt your student's face-to-face math class, so don't interrupt the online version of that same instruction.

And, finally, track your student closely. Listen to what they say about their classwork and watch for non-verbal cues. If they tell you about a problem, or if they show signs that they're falling behind – can't finish homework; becomes angry at the mention of school; won't let you see their work – reach out quickly to the teacher.

Q: What should online school look like?

That'll vary from school to school and maybe even from class to class. Many teachers will work from their homes; others will work from school classrooms.

One thing that'll be common is this: The review part of this academic year could last longer than usual.

Schools were shut down suddenly in March and the online programs offered over the last months of the school year were less rigorous than the education planned for this year. As a result, teachers and

students have a lot of ground to make up.

Q: This online school thing is frustrating. What can I do to reduce the stress?

First, the stress issue isn't trivial. In June, Gallup published a national poll in which nearly 3 in 10 parents said their children are suffering some level of "emotional harm" as a result of the isolation that comes from social distancing and online school.

Or, as a high school student in Nashville told the New York Times:

"My online school day consists of waking up at 10 a.m. instead of 6 a.m., working on my laptop in my bed instead of a classroom, and now I make my own schedule. While this sounds pretty enjoyable for any teenager, it has made me miss school...

"If you had told me a few months ago that I would be praying to go to school, I would've laughed and called you crazy, but I would do anything to go back to my school."

In schools, the pushback on stress will begin when online instruction resumes.

Emotional education is a thing in schools these days, with or without the pandemic. Students increasingly are being taught things like how to control their emotions, how to be empathetic, how to work well with others. Those skills are valuable in every workplace and every life.

That's likely to continue, in some form, during coronavirus-era online schooling. Many teachers, at all grade levels, will set aside part of the online day to let students discuss everything from what's funny about being cooped up at home, to what's scary, to how they feel when illness and economic ruin seem to be driving the world.

The push back against stress also can happen at home. Parents can boost mental health by creating a life that's as close to normal as it can be during an online school year.

That might mean more sit-down dinners and family time and reading. It also might mean paying extra attention to making sure everybody gets enough sleep.

And, of course, make sure your student gets outside for exercise as much as possible; the physical needs of childhood (or adulthood) haven't gone away because of the pandemic.

Q: What are the rules for special needs students?

Same as the old rules.

If your school has an individual plan for your student, it “remains in effect,” according to state guidelines. Also, those guidelines say schools should, “to the greatest extent possible,” continue to provide all services that were available to your child prior to the imposition of online schooling.

The state urges parents to reach out to schools or districts to get specific answers. In all, more than 700,000 students in California (out of a total student population of 6.2 million) could be affected if any changes are made to special needs instruction.

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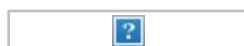
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WORLD & NATION

Coronavirus cases among U.S. children jumped 40% in late July

By [BLOOMBERG](#)

AUG. 10, 2020 | 8:38 AM **UPDATED** 8:38 AM

Coronavirus infections among U.S. children grew 40% in the last half of July, according to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Assn., bringing the total number of child infections to 8.8% of all U.S. cases.

The report, which aggregates data from 49 states, comes amid heated debate over whether schools should reopen in the fall. Although the surge of infections contradicts President Trump's assertion that kids are "virtually immune," the data also show that child infections make up a disproportionately small share of the overall outbreak in the U.S.

Many parents are eager to get their kids back in classes. Yet the coronavirus is still surging in much of the country, and there is conflicting data about how it is transmitted to and from children. Some schools that have already resumed classes have experienced outbreaks amid scenes of kids crowded together without wearing masks, raising fears that a full nationwide reopening in September will cause a new spike of infection.

The study said 97,078 new child cases were reported from July 16-30, bringing the total number since the pandemic began to 338,982. The range of ages varied from state to state, with some including an age limit as high as 24.

California, Florida and Arizona had the highest number of total child cases in the U.S., with more than 20,000 each, the report found. By population, Arizona had the highest count, with more than 1,000 cases per 100,000 children, more than double the national average of 447.

Deaths among U.S. children from COVID-19 total 86, only 0.06% of total fatalities in the country and 0.03% of infections among children.

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CALIFORNIA

An all-star economic task force is advising Newsom during the pandemic. Little is known about its work



Jason Ruckart, managing partner at Roy's restaurant in Woodland Hills, hands chopsticks to Nicole Lehning and her husband, Kyle, as they dine outdoors in what was previously the valet parking area. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

By [PHIL WILLON](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 10, 2020 | 5 AM

SACRAMENTO — Faced with a pandemic that has put millions of Californians out of work and eviscerated businesses large and small, Gov. Gavin Newsom promised that “health and science” would guide state officials in repairing the economy and steering it toward recovery.

But as Newsom rapidly reopened the state in May, he also received advice from an all-star roster of business titans. The Governor’s Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery is a 108-member group that counts former California governors, Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook, Disney Executive Chairman Bob Iger and former Federal Reserve Board Chairwoman Janet L. Yellen among its members.

For all the boldface names and huge stakes, little is known about the task force, including how extensive a role the group played in shaping the decisions to reopen California.

The task force has operated almost entirely behind closed doors, and those appointed were not required to submit state government financial disclosure forms listing their assets and business interests, which would show potential conflicts. Newsom administration officials said the task force is just an advisory panel and has no authority to make policy, and noted that the meetings are private so members can share their opinions openly.

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Still, the governor has relied on the group's recommendations to help shape his administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members were consulted about safeguards for reopening retailers and other sectors of the economy, including guidelines calling for workers and patrons inside stores and other businesses to wear face coverings. The group has also urged Newsom to expand upon the \$75 million set aside in the state budget for small-business loans.

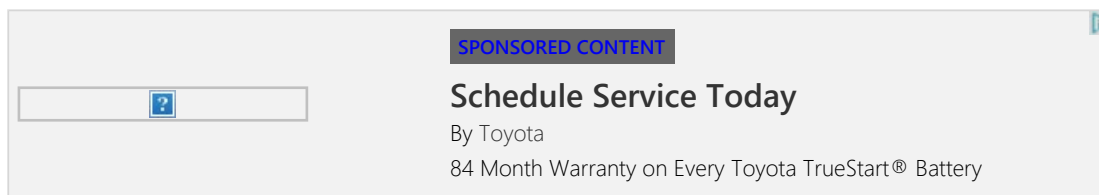
Months after the governor called together the task force, however, few details about its work have been made public, falling short of Newsom's pledge that the group would "demonstrate meaningful reforms, meaningful changes, working on bonds, working on all kinds of financial mechanisms to jump-start this economy."

And what has been unveiled has been limited in scope. The task force told The Times it has reached out to internet service providers and computer suppliers to help bridge the "digital divide" among California students and asked them to offer affordable broadband access and donate devices, and it said that the group has worked on a training-based jobs program and marketing campaigns to help small businesses and slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Some in Sacramento say they are still waiting for the big ideas promised by Newsom

when he announced the group in April.

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“The idea was to bring California’s best minds and brainpower. What’s there to account for that?” said Steve Maviglio, a Democratic strategist who served as press secretary to then-Gov. Gray Davis. “Even Congress has been able to pass some economic stimulus — and California hasn’t. That makes no sense.”

Ann O’Leary, task force co-chair and Newsom’s chief of staff, said Californians can expect to see concrete initiatives from the group soon. She said the task force is discussing more long-range, big-ticket ideas to address issues related to the California economy, including racial inequities and combating climate change, and is exploring whether some of the beneficial side effects of the work and lifestyle changes caused by the pandemic, such as reduced traffic and pollution attributed to many Californians working from home, can be maintained in a retooled California economy.

“Leaders who we asked to help us really took the call to action seriously,” she said.

Since its creation, members of the governor’s task force — which also includes Los Angeles Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong — have gathered every other week for a one-hour Zoom video call, with Newsom offering opening remarks. The panel has five subcommittees — focused on topics including small business, climate and infrastructure — that meet weekly.

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Los Angeles developer Rick Caruso, a member of the task force, said that government advisory panels often lose steam over time and that those who are initially appointed as members have proxies attend in their place. That’s not been the case on this committee, he said.

“I think this has been one of the most productive [committees], and the reason is the governor has stayed very engaged,” said Caruso, who has served on the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners and the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission.

Jamie Court of the advocacy group Consumer Watchdog criticized the lack of transparency on the task force, which he likened to a "star chamber."

"It's the worst type of construct for the public because you don't know what is being said and what information is being given to the governor," Court said.

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Most alarming, Court said, was the decision to appoint representatives from Southern California Edison and Aera Energy, a partnership of Shell Oil and ExxonMobil, who serve on the task force subcommittee for "leveraging innovation and climate."

"It shows that this committee is being used to propagate the ideas of big business and not to target climate change proposals to actually limit the exploitation of the earth and the slowing of climate change," he said.

Task force co-chair Tom Steyer, a billionaire former hedge fund manager, climate change activist and onetime presidential candidate, said members checked their personal and partisan interests "at the door." Still, Steyer said, the task force members could have done a better job letting Californians know what they've been up to.

"This is an advisory group. The decisions are made by the governor," Steyer said. "We're bringing people to the table that reflect big businesses across California, little businesses across the board, every geographic area, community leaders and community groups and nonprofit leaders."

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Steyer said the panel has reviewed dozens of proposals to help kick-start California's economy in an expeditious, long-lasting and equitable way. Steyer said he recently spoke to leaders in the solar and wind industries to see what can be done to accelerate their projects in ways that do not require state financial assistance.

"We are advising the governor on different financing options specifically in infrastructure, clean energy and bridging the digital divide," Steyer said.

Micah Weinberg of California Forward, a nonprofit focused on improving government performance and economic growth, praised the proposals to accelerate infrastructure projects throughout California, noting that billions of dollars in previously approved bond

money is readily available.

But he said the group should be doing more to address geographic and racial disparities in California's economy and cultivate the growth of Black- and Latino-owned businesses.

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"I think there's an opportunity for more bold leadership ... on some of these issues," Weinberg said. "It strikes me as the time to be taking bigger risks to deliver for the people in California."

The Newsom administration and the California Legislature need to provide measures that shield small businesses from liability claims and also thin out the thicket of state regulations that impede growth and investment, he said.

"If we're serious about small businesses, and this is especially true for minority-owned small businesses, that's going to have to be added to this agenda," Weinberg said.

Task force member Angela Glover Blackwell, the founder of PolicyLink, a nonprofit group that promotes policies to help disadvantaged Americans, said the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the devastating consequences of racial inequity in California.

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Not only are Black and Latino people more likely to be part of the essential workforce, they've been disproportionately hit by the virus itself. Black, Latino and rural students are less likely to have internet access at home, which will lead to dire consequences when most California schools begin the academic year with closed classrooms and distance learning, Blackwell said.

"The issues are bigger than tax breaks for small business," she said.

Blackwell added that more proposals are coming and that the task force, given the large size of its membership and what it is trying to accomplish, is working "well enough."

Economist William Yu of the UCLA Anderson School of Management said that of the ideas from the task force, accelerating infrastructure projects may be the easiest and most effective way to stimulate the state's economy. But he said rescuing businesses and the workforce depends mostly on the federal government's response.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, a \$2-trillion bipartisan stimulus package signed in March by President Trump, provided special unemployment benefits and offered small businesses critical financial assistance at the height of the pandemic. But the benefits expired at the end of July, and a new financial relief package has stalled in Washington.

Yu said it's essential that Congress act quickly and decisively.

"Otherwise we're going to see what happened in the early 1930s in the Great Depression," he said.

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Phil Willon covers Gov. Gavin Newsom and California politics for the Los Angeles Times. Willon grew up in Southern California and previously worked for the Tampa Tribune and the Capital in Annapolis, Md.

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CALIFORNIA

As COVID-19 cases surge, patients are dying at a lower rate. Here's why



Janil Wise, left, and Melinda Gruman, nurses at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, look over a patient's medical chart. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By [SOUMYA KARLAMANGLA](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 9, 2020 | 5 AM

When the number of people being sent to the hospital with COVID-19 began to creep up in Los Angeles County early this summer, officials warned that a [major increase in deaths was inevitable](#). A record-breaking number of cases could result in a record-breaking number of deaths, they predicted.

But nearly two months later, that has not materialized. The coronavirus continues to kill hundreds of people every week in L.A. County, but the death toll has remained lower than expected.

The trend is due in part to [younger people falling sick](#), as well as better control over the disease's spread in high-risk settings, such as nursing homes. But doctors say there's another factor pushing up survival rates: better treatments.

"It was so grim in the beginning," said Dr. Armand Dorian, an ER physician and chief medical officer for Verdugo Hills Hospital at USC. "Now we actually have regimens of treatments that do help. ... Since the beginning, say, February to now, we've learned a lot."

The trends are not limited to L.A. County. In California, 3.6% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 between March and May died of the disease. Among those diagnosed between June 1 and Aug. 3, that figure dropped to 1.2%, according to a Times analysis of state data. Expanded testing, changing patient demographics and better patient care all played a role in that drop, experts say.

The statistic is what epidemiologists call the case-fatality rate: the number of deaths divided by the number of cases. This measures how deadly the disease is once people catch it — the chance of surviving. While the pandemic remains bleak, the lowered case-fatality rate is a glimmer of progress, experts say.

The case-fatality rate exists alongside another statistic: the mortality rate — deaths divided by the total population — which reflects the spread of the disease within the population.

In [an interview with Axios](#) released last week, President Trump discounted the nation's mortality rate, which is [worse than most other countries'](#), while lauding its case-fatality rate, which is better than most countries'.

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By Stainmaster

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But an improved case-fatality rate cannot offset the vast spread of the deadly virus, experts say. California's mortality rate is rising as the state's death toll from COVID-19 surpassed 10,000 on Thursday. If many people keep falling ill, then many people will die, even with improvements in survival rates.

CALIFORNIA

California vows to fix coronavirus reporting system amid huge backlog of unreported tests

Aug. 7, 2020

Dr. Tim Brewer, an infectious disease specialist and epidemiologist at UCLA, said that even the medical improvements could be negated if the number of patients continues to grow. An overwhelmed healthcare system could hamper physicians' ability to provide lifesaving care, he said.

"We've acquired a tremendous amount of information in the last seven months that has been helpful. We just need everybody to recognize that the virus has not gone away," Brewer said.

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When COVID-19 patients first began showing up in hospitals in the spring, doctors didn't know which medicines or treatments would be effective. Little was understood about how the virus was transmitted or the best way to protect staff. USC's Dorian described healthcare workers dealing with that unprecedented crisis as "deer in headlights."

But that has changed rapidly as doctors around the world study and treat the coronavirus. Research findings in one country may within days become clinical guidelines in another.

“The collaboration between physicians all over the world over how to best treat COVID-19 has been quite extraordinary,” said Dr. Bilal Naseer, a critical care doctor in Sacramento with CommonSpirit Health, a large nonprofit hospital system. “I think the confidence level of physicians and healthcare teams is very high now — how to early-identify patients with COVID-19 and how to prevent severe disease is really much better understood.”

Early in the outbreak, panicked healthcare workers administered multiple drugs to patients to try to save them, unsure which may help. But that strategy made it hard to tell what was and wasn't working, so physicians couldn't gain knowledge they could use to help the next patients.

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“Physicians around the world and in L.A. were basically throwing anything we could at these patients,” Brewer said. “We needed to get our panic level down a little bit and do research and trials and studies.”

One of those studies, conducted by British scientists, led to a surprising finding. For other deadly coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS, steroid medications had been shown to worsen symptoms.

But the UK researchers found that [dexamethasone](#), a common and low-cost steroid, reduced mortality for patients on ventilators by a third, and by a fifth for those requiring oxygen, according to the study published in June.

Doctors had already begun administering remdesivir, an antiviral medication developed by Gilead Sciences, that had been [shown to shorten the time it takes for patients to recover from the infection](#). Both medicines are now regularly prescribed by physicians treating COVID-19 patients, they say.

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“We're miles away from having real cures like vaccinations and more specific meds,” Dorian said. “But we have something. It feels good to say, ‘Why don't we give remdesivir?’”

San Diego State University epidemiologist Eyal Oren pointed out that many people who get sick may not die, but will still endure long-term health consequences. He warned that looking at small improvements in survival rates may belie the reality that thousands continue to die from COVID-19, particularly people of color.

“Why do we have this many cases and this many deaths?” he said. “What’s the big picture?”

But for some, the improved survival rates are a sliver of hope.

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Before the latest wave of patients in L.A. County, the most people ever hospitalized with COVID-19 in the county at one time was just over 1,950 in late April. That record was broken in July, when more than 2,200 people were hospitalized with the infection.

Yet, average deaths never exceeded what they had reached in the spring. The county’s case-fatality rate from COVID-19 has dropped from 4% in May to 2% now, according to county data.

“To me, that probably means we’re doing better care,” said Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser with the L.A. County Department of Public Health.

Gunzenhauser said that the decline is probably also due to changes in who is falling ill. Infections have fallen in nursing homes, whose residents are particularly vulnerable to the virus, while cases have increased among young people, who are healthier and more likely to survive, he said.

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Dexamethasone is a cheap, widely available steroid that reduced deaths among severely ill, hospitalized COVID-19 patients. (Associated Press)

When patients do end up in the hospital, doctors have new protocols to improve their odds of survival. Early in the pandemic, doctors rushed to put patients on ventilators when they were struggling to breathe.

But now it has become clear that it may not be necessary to intubate these patients, which can open them up to other complications that actually decrease their chance of survival.

Now, physicians lay patients on their stomachs to allow more oxygen into their lungs and give them oxygen through tubes inserted into their nose. Patients are put on ventilators as a last resort, doctors say.

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“We were on a hair trigger to put people on vents at the beginning of the epidemic,” said Bradley Pollock, the chair of the department of public health sciences at UC Davis. “If someone looked like they were declining, we’re going to immediately put them on a vent — that was a mistake, in retrospect.”

LIFESTYLE

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Aug. 7, 2020

Doctors have also learned that COVID-19 tends to thicken patients' blood and form blood clots, which can cause strokes and heart attacks. In some U.S. hospitals, clots were once reported to be [the cause of 40% of COVID deaths](#). Now doctors know to administer anti-coagulants to prevent these deaths.

The knowledge gained over the last several months has improved care simply by making staff more confident, Dorian said. Patients benefit when healthcare workers aren't stressed and can take their time with them and listen to their needs, he said.

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"That's what turns people around. It's not just medicine, really," he said.

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CAPITAL JOURNAL

Coronavirus Testing Still Not Making the Grade

Lack of a national testing strategy may be the government's biggest failure



A health-care worker conducted a Covid-19 test in East Los Angeles, Calif., in July.

PHOTO: JESSICA PONS FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



By

[Gerald F. Seib](#)

Aug. 10, 2020 10:17 am ET

When the history of the coronavirus crisis is written, the absence of a national testing strategy to better slow the virus's spread while speeding the reopening of the economy and schools may go down as the biggest government failure.

In some respects, testing in America looks like a success story. Almost six months into the coronavirus crisis, the U.S. does more coronavirus tests than any other country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that some 65 million tests have been done to date.

Yet the U.S. has a mishmash of testing efforts that vary widely from state to state. Results often are so slow to arrive that millions of those tests have been rendered nearly useless. Those who are tested could be unwitting carriers of the disease while they wait for results, which helps explain the summertime virus resurgence.

Crucially, a new generation of somewhat less accurate but cheaper and more rapid screening tests is becoming available, yet the CDC has yet to provide full guidance on how best to use them, public-health activists say. Reopening schools safely would be far easier if rapid tests were widely available, along with a plan on how best to use them.

Billions more dollars would be needed to rectify these problems, yet Congress is gridlocked and has failed to pass a new coronavirus stimulus bill with such funds. The executive orders President Trump has signed in recent days to fill the gap don't address testing, and he has said testing is a problem for the states.

"We can still get this right," says Rajiv Shah, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, which first proposed a national testing program in April. "But it requires a paradigm shift." As a nation, the U.S. now is doing 4.5 million tests a week; the Rockefeller Foundation plan calls for ramping that up to 30 million. Given that it likely will be four months or more before a vaccine is available, the incentive to improve testing remains high.

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Yet here is a real-life story that illustrates where we are: A man was scheduled to go on a week's family vacation at the beginning of the month, and, in an attempt to be sure it was safe to gather, all family members took coronavirus tests in advance. Because the vacation was planned for Massachusetts, which requires a test within 72 hours before visitors arrive in the state, the test was scheduled three days before the start of the vacation.

Those three days passed with no test result provided. Then the full week of vacation came and went, still with no result. Twelve days after the test was taken, and after family members had dispersed back to their homes, there still was no result. If the man actually was carrying the virus, he had no way of knowing. Not only would other family members have been at risk, they all could have carried the virus back to their own communities. This potential for unwitting spread is one reason the U.S. has seen a summertime spike in cases.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Who should be most responsible for coronavirus testing strategy: the federal government or the states? Join the conversation below.

Beyond that, the disparities in testing availability are on vivid display every day. National Basketball Association players and White House officials can get daily tests and instant results, but average Americans can't. The coronavirus is hitting particularly hard in minority communities, yet testing is harder to find for people there, particularly because they may not be able to afford the consultation with a doctor often required before a test is approved.

The Trump administration stresses the need for an economic recovery from the coronavirus plunge, yet the lack of a more effective testing strategy is hampering the effort. Indeed, the value of rapid testing in accelerating economic activity is becoming more clear as more is learned about the disease.

The real goal of testing is “to identify people and take them out of the chain of transmission when they are positive,” says Mr. Shah. One of the most crucial lessons learned about the coronavirus recently is that almost half of the spread of the disease is done by people who aren't yet showing any symptoms—so-called asymptomatic spread—and that most asymptomatic spread occurs in the first few days after the virus has been contracted. That finding underscores the urgency of identifying through regular tests those who are carrying the virus but not showing symptoms, and rapidly taking them out of circulation.

Widespread use of antigen tests, which detect proteins associated with the virus in less than an hour without the need for laboratory work, would be a big help. With that in mind,

seven states, with aid from the Rockefeller Foundation, last week formed a compact to jointly purchase millions of these rapid-result tests. That's a step forward—but not the same as a national strategy to do the same.

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com

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Los Angeles Times

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LIFESTYLE

How to take care of someone with COVID-19 without getting yourself sick



Here's how you can best protect yourself and the rest of your family while caring for a COVID-19 patient at home. (Murugiah For The Times)

By [LISA BOONE](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 7, 2020 | 11:28 AM

We're [answering readers' questions](#) about life during the pandemic:

How can I care for someone who's sick with COVID-19, without getting sick myself?

Caring for someone with COVID-19 might sound scary, but it is possible to do so without contracting the illness yourself. And, as statistics show, most people recover. Here's how you can best protect yourself and the rest of your family while caring for a patient at home.

LIFESTYLE

We're answering your urgent questions about life during the pandemic

Aug. 8, 2020

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Begin with the basic precautions you've been hearing about since the start of the pandemic: Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Clean and disinfect surfaces often.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [also recommend](#) isolating sick family members in a separate bedroom with a private bathroom. If that's not an option, though, make sure any shared rooms have good air flow: Opening the windows can help improve circulation and remove respiratory droplets from the air.

LIFESTYLE

The do's and don'ts of wearing a face mask correctly (and comfortably)

April 16, 2020

Try to limit your exposure to sick family members. When it is necessary to interact, maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet and wear face masks (including the sick person). Eat meals separately from one another if possible, and refrain from sharing dishes, towels, bedding or electronics such as remote controls and cellphones.

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By Mazda

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Gloves should be worn when washing a sick person's dishes and clothes, and when you come in contact with their body fluids. Gloves should then be disposed of in a lined trash can followed by a good hand washing. Avoid shaking soiled laundry, as this can transmit the virus through the air.

If the bathroom is shared, it should be cleaned and disinfected after each use by the sick person, focusing on surfaces touched. Yes, this is a lot of work. But the purpose is to protect others who enter later. ("Cleaning" means soap and water, which reduces germs on surfaces; disinfecting kills the germs).

CALIFORNIA

Everything you need to know to get through the COVID-19 pandemic in California

July 31, 2020

The CDC advises caregivers to wait as long as possible to clean the bathroom after the sick person has used the lavatory, focusing on the areas touched. It is also a good idea to wear a face mask while disinfecting the bathroom.

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For the safety of others, caregivers should stay at home while caring for a sick family member and monitor themselves for fever, cough and shortness of breath. After care is complete, caregivers should get tested and stay home for 14 days before venturing out in public again.

LIFESTYLE

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July 4, 2020

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Here's How to Crush the Virus Until Vaccines Arrive

To save lives, and save the economy, we need another lockdown.

By Michael T. Osterholm and Neel Kashkari

Dr. Osterholm is director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. Mr. Kashkari is president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

Aug. 7, 2020, 3:16 p.m. ET

In just weeks we could almost stop the viral fire that has swept across this country over the past six months and continues to rage out of control. It will require sacrifice but save many thousands of lives.

We believe the choice is clear. We can continue to allow the coronavirus to spread rapidly throughout the country or we can commit to a more restrictive lockdown, state by state, for up to six weeks to crush the spread of the virus to less than one new case per 100,000 people per day.

That's the point at which we will be able to limit the increase in new cases through aggressive public health measures, just as other countries have done. But we're a long way from there right now.

The imperative for this is clear because as a nation what we have done so far hasn't worked. Some 160,000 people have died, and in recent days, roughly a thousand have died a day. An estimated 30 million Americans are collecting unemployment.

On Jan. 30, when the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a public health emergency, there were 9,439 reported cases worldwide, most in China, and only six reported cases in the United States.

On July 30, six months later, there were 17 million cases reported worldwide, including 676,000 deaths. The United States had four million reported cases and 155,000 deaths. More than a third of all U.S. cases occurred during July alone.

And the next six months could make what we have experienced so far seem like just a warm-up to a greater catastrophe. With many schools and colleges starting, stores and businesses reopening, and the beginning of the indoor heating season, new case numbers will grow quickly.

Why did the United States' Covid-19 containment response fail, particularly compared with the successful results of so many nations in Asia, Europe and even our neighbor Canada?

Simply, we gave up on our lockdown efforts to control virus transmission well before the virus was under control. Many other countries didn't let up until the number of cases was greatly reduced, even in places that had extensive outbreaks in March and April. Once the number of new cases in those areas was driven to less than one per 100,000 people per day as a result of their lockdowns, limiting the increase of new cases was possible with a combination of testing, contact tracing, case isolation and extensive monitoring of positive tests.

The United States recorded its lowest seven-day average since March 31 on May 28, when it was 21,000 cases, or 6.4 new cases per 100,000 people per day. This rate was seven to 10 times higher than the rates in countries that successfully contained their new infections. While many countries are now experiencing modest flare-ups of the virus, their case loads are in the hundreds or low thousands of infections per day, not tens of thousands, and small enough that public health officials can largely control the spread.

In contrast, the United States reopened too quickly and is now experiencing around 50,000 or more new cases per day.

While cases are falling in the hard-hit areas of Arizona, California, Florida and Texas because of the imposition of some physical-distancing measures, they are rapidly increasing in a few of Midwestern states. In Minnesota, we just documented the most new cases in a one-week period since the pandemic began.

At this level of national cases — 17 new cases per 100,000 people per day — we simply don't have the public health tools to bring the pandemic under control. Our testing capacity is overwhelmed in many areas, resulting in delays that make contact tracing and other measures to control the virus virtually impossible.

Don't confuse short-term case reductions in some states as permanent. We made that mistake before. Some have claimed that the widespread use of masks is enough to control the pandemic, but let us face reality: Gov. Gavin Newsom of California issued a public masking mandate on June 18, a day when 3,700 cases were reported in the state. On July 25, the seven-day daily case average was 10,231. We support the wearing of masks by all Americans, but masking mandates and soft limitations on indoor crowds in places such as bars and restaurants are not enough to control this pandemic.

To successfully drive down our case rate to less than one per 100,000 people per day, we should mandate sheltering in place for everyone but the truly essential workers. By that, we mean people must stay at home and leave only for essential reasons: food shopping and visits to doctors and pharmacies while wearing masks and washing hands frequently. According to the Economic Policy Institute, 39 percent of workers in the United States are in essential categories. The problem with the March-to-May lockdown was that it was not uniformly stringent across the country. For example, Minnesota deemed 78 percent of its workers essential. To be effective, the lockdown has to be as comprehensive and strict as possible.

If we aren't willing to take this action, millions more cases with many more deaths are likely before a vaccine might be available. In addition, the economic recovery will be much slower, with far more business failures and high unemployment for the next year or two. The path of the virus will determine the path of the economy. There won't be a robust economic recovery until we get control of the virus.

If we do this aggressively, the testing and tracing capacity we've built will support reopening the economy as other countries have done, allow children to go back to school and citizens to vote in person in November. All of this will lead to a stronger, faster economic recovery, moving people from unemployment to work.

We know that a stringent lockdown can have serious health consequences for patients who can't get access to routine care. But over the past six months, medical professionals have learned how to protect patients and staffs from spreading the coronavirus; therefore we should be able to maintain access to regular medical care during any new lockdown.

This pandemic is deeply unfair. Millions of low-wage, front-line service workers have lost their jobs or been put in harm's way, while most higher-wage, white-collar workers have been spared. But it is even more unfair than that; those of us who've kept our jobs are actually saving more money because we aren't going out to restaurants or movies, or on vacations. Unlike in prior recessions, remarkably, the personal savings rate has soared to 20 percent from around 8 percent in January.

Because we are saving more, we have the resources to support those who have been laid off. Typically when the government runs deficits, it must rely on foreign investors to buy the debt because Americans aren't generating enough savings to fund it. But we can finance the added deficits for Covid-19 relief from our own domestic savings. Those savings end up funding investment in the economy. That's why traditional concerns about racking up too much government debt do not apply in this situation. It is much safer for a country to fund its deficits domestically than from abroad.

Congress should be aggressive in supporting people who've lost jobs because of Covid-19. It's not only the right thing to do but also vital for our economic recovery. If people can't pay their bills, it will ripple through the economy and make the downturn much worse, with many more bankruptcies, and the national recovery much slower.

There is no trade-off between health and the economy. Both require aggressively getting control of the virus. History will judge us harshly if we miss this life- and economy-saving opportunity to get it right this time.

Michael T. Osterholm is a professor and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. Neel Kashkari is president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

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America Could Control the Pandemic by October. Let's Get to It.

The solutions to combating the coronavirus are no mystery. It's time to do this right.

By The Editorial Board

The editorial board is a group of opinion journalists whose views are informed by expertise, research, debate and certain longstanding values. It is separate from the newsroom.

Aug. 8, 2020

Six to eight weeks. That's how long some of the nation's leading public health experts say it would take to finally get the United States' coronavirus epidemic under control. If the country were to take the right steps, many thousands of people could be spared from the ravages of Covid-19. The economy could finally begin to repair itself, and Americans could start to enjoy something more like normal life.

Six to eight weeks. For proof, look at Germany. Or Thailand. Or France. Or nearly any other country in the world.

In the United States, after a brief period of multistate curve-flattening, case counts and death tolls are rising in so many places that Dr. Deborah Birx, the Trump administration's coronavirus response coordinator, described the collective uptick as a sprawling "new phase" of the pandemic. Rural communities are as troubled as urban ones, and even clear victories over the virus, in places like New York and Massachusetts, feel imperiled.

At the same time, Americans are fatigued from spending months under semi-lockdown. Bars and restaurants are reopening in some places, for indoor service — and debates are underway over if and when and how to do the same for schools — even as the virus continues to spread unchecked. Long delays in testing have become an accepted norm: It can still take up to two weeks to get results in some places. As the national death toll climbs above 160,000, mask wearing is still not universal.

It's no mystery how America got here. The Trump administration's response has been disjointed and often contradictory, indifferent to science, suffused with politics and eager to hand off responsibility to state leaders. Among the states, the response has also been wildly uneven.

It's also no surprise where the country is headed. Unless something changes quickly, millions more people will be sickened by the virus, and well over a million may ultimately die from it. The economy will contract further as new surges of viral spread overwhelm hospitals and force further shutdowns and compound suffering, especially in low-income communities and communities of color.

The path to avoiding those outcomes is as clear as the failures of the past several months.

Scientists have learned a lot about this coronavirus since the first cases were reported in the United States earlier this year. For instance, they know now that airborne transmission is a far greater risk than contaminated surfaces, that the virus spreads through singing and shouting as much as through coughing, and that while any infected person is a potential vector, superspreading events — as in nursing homes, meatpacking plants, churches and bars — are major drivers of the pandemic. By most estimates, just 10 to 20 percent of coronavirus infections account for 80 percent of transmissions.

Experts have also learned a lot about what it takes to get a coronavirus outbreak under control. Most of the necessary steps are the same ones public health experts have been urging for months.

Just because America has largely bungled these steps so far doesn't mean it can't turn things around. The nation can do better. It must.

Clear, Consistent Messaging

President Trump and his closest advisers have repeatedly contradicted the scientific evidence, and even themselves, on the severity of the pandemic and the best ways to respond to it. They've sown confusion on the importance of mask wearing, the dangers of large gatherings, the potential of untested treatments, the availability of testing and the basic matter of who is in charge of what in the pandemic response.

That confusion seems to have bred a national apathy — and a dangerous partisanship over public health measures — that will be difficult to undo. But leaders at every level can improve the situation by coordinating their messaging: Masks are essential and will be required in all public places. Social distancing is a civic responsibility. The virus is not going away anytime soon, but we can get it under control quickly if we work together.

Such messaging works best when it comes from the very top, but state and local leaders don't have to wait for federal leaders to step up.

Better Use of Data

As Dr. Tom Frieden, the former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has noted: The United States has a glut of data and a dearth of information.

Data on who is getting sick and where is not being used to guide interventions, and crucial figures like test result times and the portion of new cases that were found through contact tracing are not consistently or routinely reported. If scientists had better access to such figures, they could use it to forecast Covid-19 conditions the same way they forecast the weather: warning when a given outbreak is spreading and advising people to adjust their plans accordingly. State and local leaders can make all their data public, and the C.D.C. ought to help them get that data into a usable form.

Smarter Shutdowns

In places like Melbourne, Australia, and Harris County, Texas, health officials have created numerical and color-coded threat assessments that tell officials and citizens exactly what to do, based on how extensively the coronavirus is spreading in their communities. The highest alert levels call for full-on shelter in place, while the lowest call for careful monitoring of high-risk establishments.

It would behoove the C.D.C. to create a similar, evidence-based scale and work with state and local leaders to employ it in individual communities. In places where the virus is still rampant, that would mean much more aggressive shutdowns than have been carried out in the past. (The United States has not had a true national lockdown, shuttering only about half the country, compared with 90 percent in other countries with more successful outbreak control.)

Smarter shutdowns may also mean closing bars and indoor dining in many places so schools there can reopen more safely; closing meat processing plants until better protections are in place; and tightening state borders in a sensible, as-needed fashion.

Testing, Tracing, Isolation and Quarantine

The most consistent mantra of experts trying to get the coronavirus pandemic under control has been that the nation needs much better testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine protocols. Despite examples across the globe for how to achieve all four, the United States has largely failed on these fronts. Testing delays make contact tracing — not to mention isolation and quarantine — impossible to execute.

To resolve the crisis, federal officials need to commandeer the intellectual property of companies that have developed effective rapid diagnostics and utilize the Defense Production Act to make and distribute as many of those tests as possible. As testing is brought up to speed, officials also need to expand contact tracing and quarantine programs so that once outbreaks are brought under control, states are prepared to keep them in check.

The causes of America's great pandemic failure run deep, exacerbated by innumerable longstanding problems, from a weak public health infrastructure to institutional racism to systemic inequality in health care, housing and employment. If the pandemic forces the nation to meaningfully grapple with any of those issues, then perhaps all this suffering will not have been in vain. But that work can't really begin until Americans solve the problem that's right in front of them, with the tools that are already at their disposal.

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This Contact Tracer Is Fighting Two Contagions: The Virus and Fear

Convincing infected people to open up means helping them confront deeply held concerns about deportation or job loss.

By **Jo Becker**

Aug. 9, 2020

LOS ANGELES — Radhika Kumar goes to work every morning hoping to save lives. As a contact tracer for Los Angeles County, her job, at least on paper, entails phoning people who have tested positive for the coronavirus, along with others they may have exposed, and providing them with guidance on how to isolate so as not to infect others. If that sounds easy, it is not.

To convince people to cooperate, she has to get them to trust her. She has to convince them that they might be infected, even if they have no symptoms. “Oh yes,” she’ll say, “I’ve been hearing that a lot.” She has to let people curse at her and hang up, then she has to call them back the very next day. And if she wants them to heed her advice, she has to listen, really listen, to how scared they are that if they stay home from their jobs, they might not be able to feed their families.

“Sometimes it can really get to you,” said Ms. Kumar. “The other day I had one young lady, and she was screaming on the phone, ‘You don’t understand — I have three kids. I have to go to work.’” She went on. “I kept calling back and calling back. I’m very relentless like that. I thought about it all night — what am I going to do? I called her again first thing in the morning, and I was so relieved when she picked up.”

Even as officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to tout contact tracing’s effectiveness, and state and local health agencies across the nation deploy new armies of tracers, tracking down all the people with the coronavirus is proving to be a Sisyphean task.

One of the key reasons, as Ms. Kumar and many other tracers are finding out, is fear.

Lulled by the state’s early success in flattening the curve, officials in California, which now has more confirmed cases than any other state, failed not only to anticipate the outbreak’s more recent trajectory, but also people’s reluctance to cooperate with the government’s tracing effort. Some simply can’t be bothered, but more often people decline to participate because they are worried about wage loss, deportation or stigmatization.

Taken together, those factors have created a snowball effect that has overwhelmed tracers’ ability to reach people before it is too late.

In Los Angeles County, tracers were assigned 13,766 cases over the week ending July 28. But more than a third of the calls to people who tested positive went unanswered, and more than half of those who did pick up refused to provide at least one close contact.

“People are reluctant because they are scared,” said Ms. Kumar, a 55-year-old mother of two. “I’ve even had one person ask, ‘Are you F.B.I.?’ I said no, but they were like, ‘Well you could be.’ I just kept saying, ‘I could be, but I am not!’”

It wasn’t supposed to be this way. This spring, after California public health officials were forced to abandon widespread tracing in the face of an overwhelming onslaught of cases, Gov. Gavin Newsom regrouped and launched the most ambitious program in the nation to keep track of infected people and those they may have exposed.

The effort, called California Connected, has cost upward of \$30 million. It includes a new online academy run by the University of California to train county and state employees as disease investigators, and a public education campaign to reassure Californians that any information tracers gather is confidential.

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The state met an ambitious timetable of enrolling 10,000 trainees by early July. But while public health officials credit the manpower surge with helping to contain the pandemic at the margins, the program has been no panacea.

To be effective, contact tracing must take place promptly. The sooner public health workers reach a person who has tested positive, the sooner they can explain how to isolate and, as importantly, get a list of the person's close contacts so they can advise them to quarantine at home.

When the state decided it needed 10,000 new tracers to accomplish that goal, it based the decision on an estimate that by this point in the summer, California would be seeing about 3,600 new cases a day, said Dr. Mark Ghaly, who as the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services oversees California's virus response.

But that estimate failed to account for the explosion of cases that followed the easing of the state's stay-at-home order. On the day earlier this month that California surpassed New York to top the nation in total confirmed cases, the state recorded a record 12,807 cases, or more than three times the earlier estimate.

The spike has also caused long delays at testing labs, meaning investigations triggered by positive results are taking longer to initiate.



Contact tracing efforts have struggled to keep up with an explosion of cases since California ended its stay-at-home order. Philip Cheung for The New York Times

Dr. Ghaly believes that California has enough tracers, at least for now. But at the county level, where daily call logs are getting longer and longer, officials say initial contact is now taking up to a week in some places, if it happens at all.

Chris Finnie, who at 70 is in a high-risk category, teaches an adult ceramics class in central California that has been on hold since March. Last month, in line with reopening guidelines, she decided to offer a makeup class. She moved the pottery wheels outside, put out hand sanitizer and sprayed down contact points before and after the class.

Two students came. Two days later, one of them emailed her to say she had tested positive. That result should have been conveyed by the lab to county health officials. But in an interview one week after the class, Ms. Finney said her student had yet to be contacted by the Santa Cruz County Health Department, and as a result, neither had she. "It's very confusing," Ms. Finney said.

In Los Angeles County, where the number of tracers has gone from 200 to 2,600, Ms. Kumar and her colleagues are better equipped to keep up; once they are notified of a case, they are able to attempt to follow-up within a day more than 94 percent of the time.

But they are grappling with a more basic challenge: Getting people to answer the phone. Response rates vary, but in Los Angeles, they are so worryingly low that the county is now offering \$20 gift cards to people who complete an interview. Each day, tracers tackle a log of somewhere around 3,000 to 4,000 calls, said Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, the chief medical officer for the Los Angeles County Public Health Department.

On an average day, they might complete roughly half, meaning 1,500 to 2,000 roll into the next day, along with whatever new cases pop up. The county attempts to contact a person on three consecutive days before labeling the case a refusal.

Over the most recent seven-day period for which data was available, less than 60 percent of people who tested positive for the virus agreed to an interview.



A testing site in Riverside, Calif. To be effective, contact tracers must reach people who have tested positive promptly. Philip Cheung for The New York Times

Of those, only 40 percent were willing to provide at least one close contact. Of those close contacts, less than 64 percent picked up the phone and participated. And it remains an open question as to what percentage of people that are reached actually follow the guidance offered, which is the entire point of the program — but which officials have no ready way to track.

The Coronavirus Outbreak >

Frequently Asked Questions

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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“We worry the most that we make all these calls, but they don’t translate into isolation or quarantine,” Dr. Ghaly said. “So we are spending more and more time trying to make the calls educational — it’s sort of a choice between can we do a high volume of calls versus can we make impactful and effective calls.”

That is where people like Ms. Kumar come in. Born in Malaysia, she came to the United States more than three decades ago. After raising her children, she decided to go back to school in 2011; public health appealed to her, she said, as a way to give back to her adopted country. Now, it’s personal — one of her close friends, a nurse, is battling the virus.

She spends anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes on a call, acting as an epidemiological investigator, educator and social worker wrapped in one.

Contact tracing is not just a matter of reading from a script, though every tracer is given one. It is not just calculating the number of days a person must self-isolate, or learning certain tricks of the trade, like the fact that it is better to call older people earlier in the morning because the younger ones tend to sleep in. Ultimately it involves something much harder to teach.

“How do I convey my message and be empathetic, when I cannot even see their expression when they cry,” Ms. Kumar said she asks herself. “It’s not just an interview. It’s a conversation. I say, ‘I am here to help, let’s figure this out together.’”

One recent call involved a young mother who was positive, expecting twins and speaking from a room with her two other young children just on the other side of the door. What do the babies feel like when they move? Ms. Kumar asked, hoping to build a connection, before gently asking the mother what she was doing to isolate.

The woman told her that whenever she leaves the room, she wears gloves and a mask, but then her voice caught. “It’s hard to hug my kids with gloves on,” Ms. Kumar recalled her saying.

She told the woman she understood, but that it was important to keep her distance.

Some people she calls are worried because their immigration papers aren’t in order. “Yup, I don’t care about that, I care that you are safe and your family is safe,” she’ll respond, before assuring them that Los Angeles does not share information with federal immigration authorities.

One restaurant worker she recently contacted didn’t want to give his place of work, for fear managers would blame him for having to quarantine themselves. Other times, people will tell her they are self-isolating when she can hear that they are out and about.

She said the best approach is to educate rather than confront. She explains why it is important that co-workers be notified, and that the county can do that without ever mentioning the infected person’s name. Sometimes it works, but not always; one older lady adamantly refused to name the family members helping to care for her, insisting they were “doing the right thing” and “cleaning everything.”

On a recent Friday, Ms. Kumar managed to speak with 10 of the 14 people on her list. In most instances, it took multiple attempts. One person cited a “work call” and told her to try again in the morning.

But she keeps at it. For every case she finds and isolates, she figures she is preventing at least some spread. That is all she can hope to do, she said, until there is vaccine.

“We are making a difference — I know we are,” Ms. Kumar said as she prepared for another day of calls, a long list of new cases in front of her.



OPINION • Opinion Columnist

Election integrity will be put to the test in California this November





A poll worker disinfects the area at a pop-up voting center in Porter Ranch, CA Tuesday, May 12, 2020. (Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

By **SUSAN SHELLEY** | |

PUBLISHED: August 8, 2020 at 6:41 p.m. | UPDATED: August 8, 2020 at 6:41 p.m.



New York City tried to make voting easier, and the result was chaos.

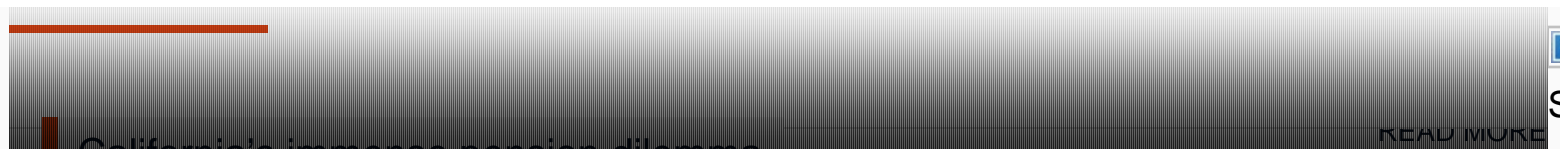
City elections officials were overwhelmed with a flood of vote-by-mail ballots, more than 400,000, or ten times the usual number in a primary. Many ballot envelopes came in without the required postmarks.

That problem may have been caused by processing errors at the post office. The envelopes provided to voters to return their ballots were postage-paid, which may have led to incorrect handling and missing postmarks.

Late Monday, a judge in Manhattan ruled that elections officials must count roughly 1,000 ballots with

problem or missing postmarks in one congressional race. When the votes were counted, Rep. Carolyn Maloney narrowly defeated challenger Suraj Patel.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



The results were final on August 4. The election was held on June 23.

There were several other races in New York City that dangled, unresolved, for six weeks while elections officials struggled to verify and count absentee ballots. Even when the final results were certified, city elections officials declined to release final vote totals. “The Board of Elections has preliminarily certified our race without a final vote tally,” Patel complained.

New York City’s primary is a fire bell in the night for California, where for the first time, every registered voter in the state will receive a vote-by-mail ballot beginning October 5.

The ballots will be accompanied by a postage-paid return envelope.

In recognition that the Postal Service may be overwhelmed by the volume, California lawmakers extended the period of time for returned ballots to be received and counted. Under Assembly Bill 860, rushed through the Legislature and signed by the governor on June 18, ballots received up to 17 days after the November 3 election will be accepted and counted, if valid.

What makes them valid? There’s supposed to be a postmark or official indication that the ballot was mailed or dropped off no later than November 3. There’s supposed to be a signature that matches the voter’s signature on file. And of course, there’s supposed to be a valid voter registration associated with each ballot that is counted. Errors in the voter file make this a challenge. L.A. County has sent out millions of postcards asking voters if they’re still there.

The challenge for county elections officials in this fall’s election is unprecedented. Not only do they have to send ballots and other election material to every voter, then verify and count a record number

of vote-by-mail ballots, they also have to provide in-person voting locations with equipment and procedures that meet the Secretary of State's standards for certified voting technology.

In addition, AB 860 requires counties to offer every voter the option of using a certified remote accessible vote-by-mail system. This voting technology requires counties to send a voter a personal identification number, or PIN, that allows the voter to access his or her ballot on a home computer, phone or tablet, using existing internet browsers. The ballot is "marked" online, but that information doesn't go anywhere—the voter must print out the completed ballot and mail it back to the county elections offices, where an employee will "remake" the ballot by copying the voter's choices onto an official ballot that will be scanned and tallied.

As of January, Secretary of State Alex Padilla has "conditionally approved" three remote access vote-by-mail systems for use in California. They are Democracy Live Secure Select 1.2.2, Five Cedars Group Alternate Format Ballot (AFB) v5.2.1 and Dominion ImageCast Remote 5.2.

Before AB 860, this technology was available to a limited number of voters who were overseas or disabled. Now any voter can request it.

So county elections officials will have to mail out a statewide total of roughly 20 million vote-by-mail ballots, and they'll also have to staff and manage in-person polling places that are open on Election Day. In counties using the Voter's Choice Act procedures, some polling places may be open for a total of eleven days.

Then the county elections officials will have to cope with the aftermath. "The Return of the Ballots" would make a fine title for a horror film.

The ballots will be mailed out beginning October 5, which means they'll start coming back on October 7. They'll continue to trickle or flood in until 17 days after November 3.

County elections workers will have to verify each vote-by-mail ballot and each provisional ballot. Remote access vote-by-mail ballots require the extra step of hand-copying the voter's choices. All the verification and tallying has to be completed by the deadline set in law for the election results to be certified.

Then any voter has the right to request a recount, but that's a very costly undertaking under the new system, in which ballots are not sorted by precinct but are simply scanned and then stored unsorted in boxes. A group in Long Beach is suing L.A. County Registrar of Voters Dean Logan after his office quoted a six-figure cost to retrieve and recount ballots in the March 3 city election on Measure A, a sales tax extension that passed by 16 votes. Does the excessive cost under the new system

constitute a denial of the voters' right to request a recount? It's an issue the courts will have to decide.

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The decision by Gov. Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers to send a vote-by-mail ballot to every voter in California was made in the panic over COVID-19, out of fear that crowded polling places would not be safe.

But this new experiment will be tried for the first time in an important November election, when turnout is likely to be high. Close congressional races and costly tax increases could be decided by narrow margins.

If California experiences chaos similar to what just happened in New York City, voters would have some justification for a lack of confidence that the results are accurate or legitimate.

One more election reform is needed in California. Audits and recounts are an indispensable part of the process of maintaining public confidence in our elections. Lawmakers should require counties to sort and store ballots by precincts. Whatever it costs, the price of not doing it is far higher.

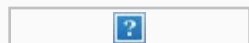
Susan Shelley is an editorial writer and columnist for the Southern California News Group. Susan@SusanShelley.com. Twitter: @Susan_Shelley

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CALIFORNIA

Firefighters report progress against 32,000-acre Apple fire in Riverside County



Scorched terrain surrounds a home off Bluff Street as the Apple fire smolders in the background on Tuesday in Banning, Calif. (Gina Ferazzi/Los Angeles Times)

By [ALEX WIGGLESWORTH](#) | STAFF WRITER

AUG. 9, 2020 | 10:21 AM

A massive vegetation fire continues to burn more than a week after [it broke out in Riverside County](#) but firefighters are getting a handle on the blaze as their focus shifts from protecting homes to keeping the flames from spreading, officials said.

The Apple fire had burned 32,412 acres, destroyed four homes and was 40% contained as of Sunday morning. Officials estimated it would take nine more days to fully contain the fire, which continued to burn northeast into the steep and remote terrain of the San Geronio Wilderness.

Fire officials on Saturday dispatched a 10-person team into the forest to fight the fire from the ground and planned to send in a second team Sunday.

Along the southern flank of the blaze, firefighters were scouring the perimeter in the Millard Canyon area, looking for hot spots and dousing smoldering embers.

All [mandatory evacuation orders](#) had been lifted, but evacuation warnings were still in effect for Forest Falls, Pioneertown, Rimrock and Morongo Valley in San Bernardino County and the Whitewater area in Riverside County.

The San Gorgonio Wilderness was closed, as were U.S. Forest Service recreation areas in the Forest Falls area and the Pacific Crest Trail between the Cottonwood Trailhead and Pipes Canyon Road.

Still, fire officials said they did not expect the perimeter of the fire to grow much Sunday after they saw no forward progression the day before.

The fire started July 31 in the 9000 block of Oak Glen Road. It [was ignited by a diesel-fueled vehicle](#) that spewed burning carbon from its exhaust system, authorities said.

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By Stainmaster

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On Thursday and Friday, firefighters set controlled fires along the eastern edge of the fire to burn away vegetation and limit the flames' spread. On Sunday, they credited those efforts with helping suppress the fire's forward movement, saying that allowed them to shift their focus from protecting communities to preventing the fire from growing.

More than 2,700 personnel were fighting the blaze, but officials said that number could decrease as they started to scale down the effort, especially along the southern and western edges of the fire, where the threat to developed communities had been reduced.

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NEWS CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY • News

Many evacuation warnings canceled for Apple fire, now at 42% containment



Los Rios Rancho U-Pick orchard workers set up tents for customers as the Apple Fire sends plumes of smoke high into the sky east of them after evacuations were lifted in Oak Glen on Friday, August 7, 2020. (Photo by Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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

PUBLISHED: August 9, 2020 at 9:25 a.m. | UPDATED: August 9, 2020 at 9:47 p.m.



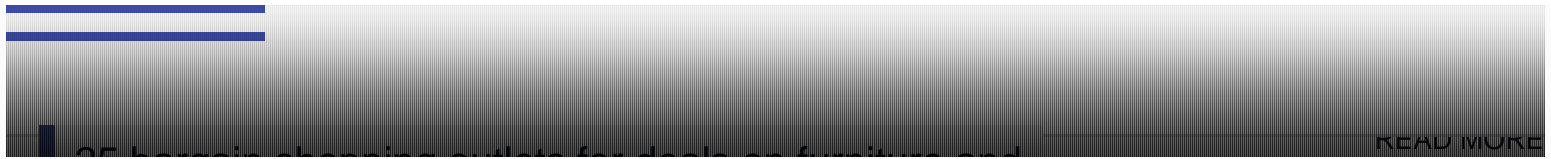
Many evacuation warnings for the 32,412-acre Apple fire were canceled with the blaze now mostly in the San Gorgonio Wilderness and desert Morongo Valley, and containment at 42% on Sunday night.

All evacuation warnings in Riverside County were lifted Sunday along with evacuation warnings for the San Bernardino County communities of Forest Falls, Rimrock and Pioneertown.

The warnings continued for the entire Morongo Valley – including both sides of Highway 62.

The warnings are issued when authorities want an area to be alert, but no mandatory or voluntary evacuation orders have been issued.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



And with containment of the fire growing from 35% Saturday night and 40% Sunday morning, “fire managers (will) shift focus from protecting communities to working on preventing the fire footprint from growing,” fire incident commanders said in a Sunday afternoon statement.

“As progress continues on fire containment lines, resources that are no longer needed will be released from the incident over the next several days,” the statement said.

Crews on the southern and western flanks of the fire, in the general area of Riverside County’s Cherry Valley where the blaze started on July 31, will be reduced, but enough will remain on hand to protect the area, the incident commanders said.

Fire behavior analyst Dennis Burns said Sunday crews in that area were on “patrol status”

The reduction of crews is under way. There were 2,229 fire personnel assigned to the Apple fire on Sunday night, down from 2,721 Saturday night, the fire command post reported. Four homes and eight other structures were destroyed in the fire, and one firefighter was injured.

Also, firefighters were being brought to helicopter landing areas created along the northern edge of the fire, Burns said.

One landing spot in the northeast end of the fire, inside the San Geronio Wilderness, was established Sunday, he said.

“We had to use rappellers to do that, to get in there. They cleared some trees and they’re going to begin flying in some crews,” he said. “We are looking at three to five days of really difficult work in

there.”

West of that, still the northern edge of the fire, crews flown in Saturday assessed an area that included steep terrain.

“Some of this area in here, crews can’t even walk, it’s just super-steep, razor-back ridges, but they’ve gone out as far as they can.”

He said they found “nothing that is truly a threat to the line right now.” He said aircraft were being brought in to fight the fire with that crew Sunday.

Other firefighting areas aided by new crews included the northwest end of the fire, where firefighters brought in Saturday by helicopter were securing a fire line in the area of Wilshire Peak, which sits roughly north of Oak Glen and south of Forest Falls, along a ridge line between the two communities.

“They are doing really heavy mop-up, just to make sure that line is secure,” Burns said. He estimated two to three days of work to show suppression of the fire in that area.

Crews were being brought in by road on the eastern edge of the fire around the Snow Peak area, Burns said.

Along the southern end of the fire above the Morongo Valley, Burns said crews were fighting the fire in lighter fuels. “We’re feeling really comfortable this is going to hold,” he said.

Crews Sunday dealt with high temperatures in the 80s to lower 90s along with afternoon wind gusts of up to 25 mph. A warming and drying trend was expected to continue Monday.

Besides the continuing evacuation warning for the Morongo Valley, the San Gorgonio Wilderness remains closed, as does the Pacific Crest Trail from the Cottonwood Trailhead, to Forest Road 1N101, also called Pipes Canyon Road.

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

The Apple fire started just before 5 p.m. July 31 when a diesel-engine vehicle’s faulty exhaust system spewed hot debris into brush along Oak Glen Road in Cherry Valley, igniting it in several spots, investigators said.

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The Apple Fire burns in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Evacuation warnings lifted in Pioneertown and Rimrock, still in place for Morongo Valley

Aug 09, 2020 9:29 PM

MORONGO BASIN — Apple Fire incident commanders lifted evacuation warnings in Pioneertown and Rimrock Sunday afternoon but kept them in place for Morongo Valley.

Several successful firefighting operations around the fire's perimeter lowered the threat to life and property,



News

Evacuation warnings lifted in Pioneertown and Rimrock, still in place for Morongo Valley



The Desert Trail

Mom from 29 Palms is in ICU with COVID-19

according to a news release from the San Bernardino National Forest command.

They also lifted all evacuation warnings in Riverside County and in Forest Falls in San Bernardino County.

The Apple Fire stayed at 50.6 square miles, keeping the same footprint, through Saturday and over Sunday night. It was 42% contained at the last report.

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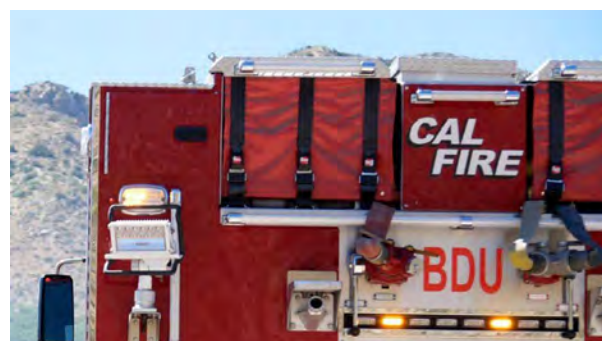
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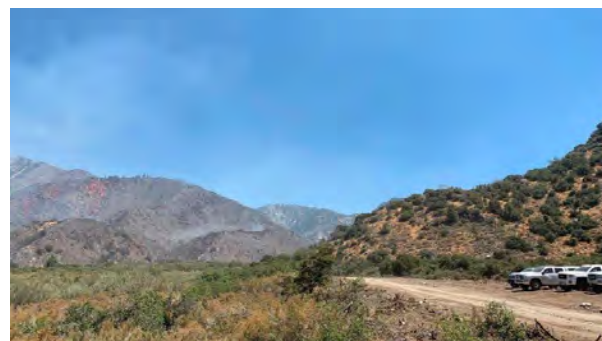
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Ontario airport adding flights to major US cities



A Southwest Airlines jet sits at the gate outside terminal 4 at Ontario International Airport Friday June 12, 2020. Southwest will

resume flights to Chicago on Aug. 11, 2020. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

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

PUBLISHED: August 8, 2020 at 7:30 a.m. | UPDATED: August 8, 2020 at 3:07 p.m.

While major airlines are reducing the number of flights at some airports in the state due to decreasing demand, Ontario International Airport is bucking the downward trend.

Three airlines are adding flights departing Ontario airport this month to western and Midwestern cities, marking the fourth straight month of increases, the airport announced last week.

Southwest Airlines will resume nonstop service suspended since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in March, to Chicago's Midway International Airport. A morning flight will leave ONT every day starting Tuesday, Aug. 11.

United Airlines has brought back its suspended flight to Houston's George Bush International Airport as of Aug. 3. That flight is also once a day.

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Frontier Airlines is adding two flights a week to Denver.



Jonathon Nield, senior manager of route planning for Frontier Airlines, announces new nonstop flights from Ontario International Airport to Seattle on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020. (Photo by Steve Scauzillo/SCNG).

Ontario will have 47 daily departures in August, 36% lower than in August 2019. But that is up slightly from 44 departures in July. In April, the airport was flying only 7% of its flights as compared to April 2019.

“The past several months have been challenging, to say the least, but we have remained focused on restoring commercial air service at Ontario,” said Mark Thorpe, chief executive officer of the Ontario

International Airport Authority in a statement.

Ontario's additional flights are bright spots in a dim airline market across the globe. The slowdown has hit airports harder with more international carriers. For example, a study released by crankyflier.com, an airline blog and concierge service based in Long Beach, showed LAX at 19.4% in international flights and San Francisco at 17.3%.

Mexico is one of the few countries open for business to U.S. air travelers, said Brett Snyder, creator and editor of crankyflier. Ontario airport has flights to Guadalajara, Mexico via Volaris Airlines.

Most of the passengers taking flights to Mexico are visiting friends and relatives, Snyder said. "That bodes well for Ontario," he said. ONT seeing longer flights to major U.S. cities is also a good sign, he said.

"Houston, Chicago and Denver: Sure, that is significant," Snyder said Friday, Aug. 7. "The fact that these flights are coming back, shows they are seeing some demand."

A study posted by Snyder done by PaxEx.Aero, an industry blogging site, looked at the number of passengers going through TSA screening at major airports with more than 10,000 boardings.

Out of 13 airports studied, Ontario was the airport with the highest percentage of boardings over the Fourth of July holiday week as compared to roughly the same period last year.

The study looked at TSA data for the week of June 28-July 4, 2020 as compared to June 30-July 6, 2019. For comparison, Hollywood-Burbank Airport had 27%, John Wayne (Orange County) Airport

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was at 28% and LAX at 20%.

Airports in the inland part of the state, including Sacramento, Fresno, Palm Springs and Ontario were in the top 4, the study showed.

Snyder surmised there is a more willingness for air travel by passengers from Inland areas of California than along the coast, because the inland regions were not experiencing the same frequency of coronavirus cases and deaths as coastal areas.

Cases and deaths have surged in Riverside and San Bernardino counties since early July, when the study was taken. Snyder says that fact, along with shutdowns ordered by Gov. Gavin Newsom in July, have softened flight bookings since then.

Ontario airport may be dodging the effects of some airlines that were bullish in June and July scaling back in August and September.

“It is not going well. Demand is down. The recovery they had seen in June has stalled and they are pulling back now,” Snyder said, citing cuts nationally in scheduled flights by Southwest, American, United and JetBlue for August and September.

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NEWS CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY • News

22-year-old woman shot and killed in San Bernardino



Dalia Avelina Camacho-Palomera, 22, of San Bernardino was found fatally shot by San Bernardino Police responding to the 2600 block of South Copper Lane early Sunday, Aug. 9. (Photo courtesy of the San Bernardino Police Department)



By **ERIC LICAS** | elicas@scng.com |

PUBLISHED: August 9, 2020 at 4:35 p.m. | UPDATED: August 9, 2020 at 4:37 p.m.



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A shooting in San Bernardino left a 22-year-old woman dead early Sunday, Aug. 9.

Officers were summoned to investigate reports of gunfire on the 2600 block of South Copper Lane at about 12:45 a.m., San Bernardino Police Department officials said in a statement. They encountered a woman who had been shot, and called paramedics.

First responders attempted to save her life, but the victim died as a result of her injuries, police said. She was later identified as Dalia Avelina Camacho-Palomera of San Bernardino.

Further details regarding what led up to her death were not immediately released. A description of any possible suspect was not available Sunday afternoon.

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Authorities asked anyone with information that might help investigators to contact either San Bernardino Police Det. A Reyna at 909-384-5628 and reyna_ar@sbcity.org, or Sgt. A. Tello at 909-384-5613 and tello_al@sbcity.org

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Man shot to death in Mentone during argument, suspect arrested



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

PUBLISHED: August 8, 2020 at 4:36 p.m. | UPDATED: August 10, 2020 at 7:40 a.m.



A 21-year-old man was arrested Friday on suspicion of shooting another man to death during an argument in Mentone earlier this week, authorities said.

William James Guy of Mentone was taken into custody Friday night after he was questioned by police in connection with the shooting death of 26-year-old Dylan Moi of Mentone on Wednesday, Aug. 5, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials said.

The two had argued in the area of Capri and Malachite Avenues before 11:15 p.m. that night when Guy allegedly pulled a gun and shot Moi, authorities said.

Moi was found on the ground by deputies, who rendered aid before paramedics took him to Loma Linda University Medical Center, where he died, authorities said.

TOP ARTICLES 1/5



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It wasn't known what sparked the argument, nor how detectives connected Guy to the shooting. He was being held in jail on more than \$1 million bail and was scheduled to make a court appearance Monday, Aug. 10, according to inmate records.

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22-year-old woman shot and killed in San

Search warrant in Victorville turns up weapons, over 100 pounds of cannabis

By **Martin Estacio**

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 8, 2020 at 12:18 AM

Deputies recently served a search warrant at a Victorville home, seizing over 100 pounds of cannabis, as well as large-capacity magazines and gun-making parts.

A tipster who believed a residence in the 13100 block of Arvila Drive “was being used as an illegal, marijuana cultivation site” alerted deputies July 31, the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department said.

Authorities said several people in the home tried to flee through the back when deputies arrived on scene.

The deputies arrested five people on suspicion of possessing marijuana for sale: Lu Jie, 37; Jian Chen, 42; Meiya Zheng, 40; Chichi Zheng, 42; Ri Zheng, 46.

During a search, 108 pounds of marijuana was discovered.

“In addition, digital scales, packaging material, cash, a firearm, several large capacity magazines, and miscellaneous unregistered gun making parts, including a silencer, were located,” Sheriff’s officials said.

The San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office is also considering several firearm charges, according to the Sheriff’s Department.

A search of booking records did not show any of the five people in custody as of Friday.

Anyone with information about this investigation is asked to contact Deputy C. Smith, Deputy M. Baltierra or Deputy D. Fratt of the Victorville Sheriff’s Station at 760-241-2911 or Sheriff’s Dispatch at 760-956-5001.

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).

Sheriff's: Man shoots, kills son in Victorville

By **Martin Estacio**

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 8, 2020 at 6:34 PM

Authorities have arrested a father who they say shot and killed his 30-year-old son in Victorville on Friday.

Clyde Buschbaum Sr., 49, was booked on suspicion of murder Saturday morning. He is being held without bail at the High Desert Detention Center in Adelanto.

Buschbaum is scheduled to appear in Victorville Superior Court on Tuesday.

Deputies responded to the 16700 block of Yucca Avenue on Friday night to “911 calls of gunshots heard near an apartment complex,” the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department said.

Deputies detained Buschbaum and found “an unresponsive male victim, outside of the apartment, suffering from gunshot wounds.”

The man, later identified as Clyde Buschbaum Jr., was pronounced dead at the scene.

Homicide detectives determined that during an altercation between father and son, “Clyde Sr. shot and killed his son,” Sheriff’s officials said.

Booking records show Buschbaum Sr. is also being held for a misdemeanor warrant after he failed to appear to a June hearing for a DUI case.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Michelle Del Rio, Specialized Investigations Division – Homicide Detail at 909-387-3589.

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