We’ve all faced the issue of what to do with clothing or household items we no longer need or use but are too good to throw away. Finding a nearby thrift store or donation center to take them to can be challenging. That’s especially true if you live in a remote mountain community. Fortunately, residents and businesses in the San Bernardino Mountains don’t have to look far.

**One Person's Trash . . .**

Running Springs is a town of over 4,800 residents located 6,000 feet up in the mountain range above San Bernardino. It is a gateway community to popular resorts such as Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear Lake. There is no landfill in the mountains; the nearest is 30 miles away in Redlands. Instead, the County of San Bernardino provides a transfer
station called Heaps Peak in Running Springs. Here, businesses and residents can drop off their trash and unwanted items to transfer to a landfill elsewhere.

... Is Another’s Treasure

Athens operates nine transfer stations at remote locations throughout the County. Heaps Peak offers something the other transfer stations do not have: an onsite thrift store, the Drop and Shop. Here, residents can drop off unwanted items that they don’t want to discard in the landfill. Items suitable for resale are spruced up and offered for resale at a fraction of their original cost. Items that are not salvageable are sent to the landfill.

The store enjoys strong community support. "Residents appreciate that these items are not being thrown away," Heaps Peak Operations Supervisor Carlos Rodriguez said. "They know their donations get a second life."

A Community Resource

The store has been a fixture in the community for decades. Originally named One Man’s Treasure, it was previously owned by a local resident. It is a popular spot for shoppers looking for a bargain. Most are mountain residents; others come from nearby valley or desert cities and as far away as Los Angeles.

The store occupies an unassuming fabricated steel building roughly the length of a football field. It has a walk-in entrance, but most customers come in through the loading bay, which is open during the
day. Customers can back up their vehicles to the loading bay entrance to load or unload items.

**Expect the Unexpected**

Inside the Drop and Shop is a variety of gently – and some not so gently – used items. Donations run the gamut, including clothing, furniture, appliances, electronics, games, golf clubs, vehicle parts, pictures, records, and books – lots of books. Even snow blowers. “Every day brings something different. You never know what’s going to come in,” said Tammy Bergendahl, store clerk for the past three years. “As long as it’s in good condition and someone else can reuse it, then we’ll take it.”

Items commonly come from people moving into or out of the area, business closings, and estate sales. Some rare works of art have been dropped off, to be snatched up for a pittance by shoppers with a keen eye. One of the largest donations recently purchased was a canoe.

**The Real Mission: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

The Drop and Shop is a valued community resource that helps residents reuse items. Beyond that, the store helps to fulfill local recycling efforts to preserve and protect the mountain environment. And it provides an alternative to dumping for bulky items. “The ultimate goal of the store,” Carlos said, “is to divert even more material from the landfill.” The Drop and Shop fulfills that mission well.

*For more information, visit [www.athensservices.com](http://www.athensservices.com).*
California considers indoor mask rules after CDC’s recommendation
Lilian Zhu, 17, wears a face mask inside Charlie's Coffee House in South Pasadena on July 18. California is considering following new CDC guidance recommending face masks indoors in regions with high coronavirus transmission. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

BY LUKE MONEY | STAFF WRITER
JULY 27, 2021 6:01 PM PT

California health officials are reviewing federal guidance that residents who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 should resume wearing masks in indoor public settings in regions with elevated levels of coronavirus transmission, but have not yet decided whether to alter the state’s rules to match.

“We are doing a full review of the updated recommendations released by the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] today and will evaluate existing guidance to determine the best path forward to protect Californians from the spread of COVID-19
and the highly contagious Delta variant,” the California Department of Public Health wrote Tuesday afternoon in response to an email inquiry from The Times.

The CDC on Tuesday issued new guidance that vaccinated people should return to wearing masks indoors in public settings in parts of the country where the coronavirus is widely spreading.

Specifically, the federal agency is now advising that residents mask up in such situations in places where community spread is considered “substantial” or “high” — the two worst classifications on the agency’s four-tier scale.

Most of California fell into one of those categories as of Tuesday afternoon, including the entire southern third of the state, save for San Luis Obispo County.

Many Californians live in areas that already recommend or, in the case of Los Angeles County, require that all residents wear masks in indoor public places.
Face coverings also will be required in such spaces in Yolo County starting Friday, officials said this week.

During a news conference shortly before the new guidance was announced, Gov. Gavin Newsom said the state would review the details when they became available and “make some comments in very short order.”

He noted, however, that “we’ve been working hand in glove with the CDC — or face to mask with the CDC — for some time.”

California’s existing masking rules align with those previously issued at the federal level. Generally speaking, fully vaccinated Californians are allowed to largely go without face coverings, while the unvaccinated still need to mask up indoors while in public.

There are some settings in which everyone — regardless of vaccination status — must wear masks. Those include transit hubs or while aboard public transportation; in healthcare settings and long-term care facilities; indoors at K-12 schools, child-care
facilities or other youth settings; in homeless shelters, emergency shelters and cooling centers; and in correctional facilities and detention centers.

Newsom has been pressed repeatedly on the possibility of issuing a new statewide mask mandate or recommendation in recent weeks, and has consistently responded that such measures won’t be necessary if more people get vaccinated.

“I encourage folks to get vaccinated,” he told reporters Monday. “That’s our focus.”

California, like much of the country, is working to beat back a significant and sustained increase in coronavirus infections and COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Over the past week, the state has reported an average of nearly 7,000 new coronavirus cases a day — more than six times the rate from a month ago, according to data compiled by The Times.
On Monday, 3,200 coronavirus-positive patients were hospitalized statewide, with 720 of them in intensive care.

Both those figures have doubled in the past two weeks, and Newsom said the state isn’t anticipating that trend reversing anytime soon.

“Our projections are sobering,” he told reporters Monday. “Our projections are, over the course of the next number of weeks, we’ll show a significant increase in hospitalizations
if we continue down this path.”

**Coronavirus in California »**

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<td><strong>Cases</strong> +161%</td>
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<td><strong>Deaths</strong> -21%</td>
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of Californians have received a dose are fully vaccinated

How to get your vaccine »  What’s reopening »

Despite the steep recent increases, California remains in far better shape than during the height of the fall and winter surge, when the state was recording an average of more than 40,000 daily cases, and nearly 22,000 coronavirus-positive patients were hospitalized on some days.

COVID-19 deaths also have remained relatively low — at about 22 per day, on average.
Fatalities are the ultimate lagging indicator of coronavirus spread, and sometimes it takes weeks for increases in infections to trigger a resulting rise in deaths. However, some officials have expressed optimism that the domino effect may not materialize in the same way this time around, given how many Californians have already been vaccinated.

 Officials have also stressed that the vast majority of new cases are occurring in those who have yet to get their shots.

“People who are not vaccinated are driving up cases and hospitalizations in California, and we urge everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated now so we can keep our kids in school and businesses open,” state health officials wrote in their statement to The Times.

According to the California Health and Human Services Agency, the latest coronavirus case rate among unvaccinated residents is thought to be above 14 per 100,000 people — roughly seven times the rate for those who are fully vaccinated.

And more than 97% of people now hospitalized for COVID-19 nationally have not been vaccinated, according to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky.
Nearly 61% of all Californians have received at least one dose to date, and 53% are fully vaccinated, Times’ data show.

However, that still leaves millions of people who have either not yet rolled up their sleeves, or are not yet eligible to do so. This significant slice of the population, officials and experts say, remains vulnerable to infection and illness — particularly given the rapid spread of the Delta variant.
Roughly 83% of coronavirus cases that have been analyzed in July involved the Delta variant, up from about 53% in June, according to the latest data released by the California Department of Public Health.

That strain, L.A. County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer warned over the weekend, is “one of the most aggressive and infectious respiratory diseases known.”

As part of its effort to reverse the rising tide of cases, California will require all state employees — as well as workers in public and private healthcare facilities and congregate settings such as jails, homeless shelters and senior living homes — to show proof they’ve been vaccinated against COVID-19, starting next month.
Those who are unvaccinated, or decline to provide the requested documentation, will be subjected to regular testing and have to wear masks while working indoors.

“We are sincere in our belief and desire that we need to step things up at this stage of the pandemic,” Newsom said.
Can my employer require me to get vaccinated? Here’s what we know
SAN FRANCISCO — Los Angeles and a growing number of other government entities are taking a new stand in the fight against the coronavirus.

They are requiring employees to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or undergo weekly testing to show they are negative for the illness.

The move gets to the heart of an issue that both public and private employers have been grappling with: Can companies require workers to be vaccinated?

This is something that will surely be litigated in the courts in the coming months and years as more employers demand vaccinations.

California officials said Monday that state employees and healthcare workers would soon be required to show proof they’ve been vaccinated or undergo regular testing. New York City declared similar plans.

San Francisco and Pasadena have also announced future vaccination requirements for their employees; both cities have hitched their requirements to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s granting full formal approval to at least one of the COVID-19 vaccines now under emergency authorization. The University of California system also announced last week it would require vaccines for all students, faculty and others for the fall term.

What are the legal issues?

Legal experts said many of the specific questions surrounding COVID-19 vaccination requirements are being hashed out in court.
Healthcare and child-care workers have frequently been required to have certain immunizations, but broader rules covering all employees have been less common in recent history, generally because people are expected to have been vaccinated against illnesses as children, said Lindsay Wiley, a professor at American University Washington College of Law.

Wiley said those who have challenged COVID-19 rules have argued that government agencies cannot mandate a vaccination that has emergency authorization, rather than formal FDA approval, and that such rules violate individual rights or infringe on religious liberty.

**What have courts said in the past?**

Courts have previously upheld laws requiring compulsory vaccination: In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld state laws that require vaccination against communicable diseases. The case stemmed from a Massachusetts law that permitted city health boards to enforce mandatory, free vaccination requirements for adults over 21.

In a 7-2 decision, Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote that “the rights of the individual ... may at times, under the pressure of great dangers, be subjected to such restraint, to be enforced by reasonable regulations, as the safety of the general public may demand.”

Although those questions are still being “actively litigated,” Wiley said, courts have not seemed very receptive to those arguments. In New Mexico, a federal judge declined to immediately block a COVID-19 vaccination requirement that covered firefighters, officers at detention centers and other workers in Doña Ana County while a legal challenge is pending.
How about special cases?

Richard W. Warren, a Detroit-based lawyer who represents employers throughout the country, said district judges in Texas and Indiana have recently rejected challenges to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations — one by a hospital, the other by a university.

“Not a single decision that I have seen treated the vaccine differently because it has only been conditionally approved,” Warren said.

Warren said exemptions must be made, however, for workers with disabilities or religious beliefs against vaccination, and employers can ask workers for notes from physicians or pastors to be excused from a requirement.

In May, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said federal law permits private employers to require that workers be vaccinated, as long as there are accommodations for disabilities and religious beliefs.

“Federal EEO laws do not prevent an employer from requiring all employees physically entering the workplace to be vaccinated for COVID-19, so long as employers comply with the reasonable accommodation provisions of the ADA [Americans With Disabilities Act] and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other EEO considerations,” the commission said.
Customers at Wa Wa Restaurant in Long Beach are wearing masks. The CDC now advises vaccinated people in areas with high COVID infection rates to wear masks in indoor public places. Photo by Pablo Unzueta for CalMatters

IN SUMMARY
Under the CDC’s new mask recommendations, vaccinated people in 45 California counties — all of its most populous areas — are advised to wear masks in public indoor places.
Nearly all vaccinated Californians should return to wearing masks indoors under new federal guidelines issued today for areas where COVID-19 is surging.

The new guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control apply to regions with “high or substantial” transmission rates, which includes 45 of California’s 58 counties and about 96% of its nearly 40 million people.

The guidelines would cover all of California’s most populous counties. The counties, with lower COVID-19 rates, that are not included are: Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Glenn, Tehama, Lassen, Modoc, Sierra, Alpine, Mono, Inyo and Tulare. About 1.7 million people live in those counties.

The announcement reverses an earlier CDC recommendation, issued in mid-May, that it was safe for vaccinated people to remove their masks in most settings.

All unvaccinated people, including children not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccines, should continue to wear masks in all public indoor places under state and federal recommendations.

The CDC also recommended today that vaccinated people in all areas of the country wear masks indoors if they are immunocompromised or have a higher risk of severe disease if infected, or if they live with someone who is. It also issued guidelines that everyone who attends, works at or visits a K-12 school wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

Find out whether your county has a high rate of COVID transmission on this [CDC interactive map](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html). The new CDC guidelines cover any county colored red or orange.
As in other states, California’s COVID-19 cases have spiked in recent weeks as the more infectious Delta variant has become dominant. Nearly 30 percent of eligible Californians remain unvaccinated along with children too young to be immunized.

Nationally, nearly two-thirds of U.S. counties are experiencing high or substantial transmission rates, according to CDC data.

State health officials today reported more than 7,700 new COVID-19 cases and five new deaths, compared to about 700 new cases on June 15, the state’s reopening day.

In response, California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday said health care workers and state employees must be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing and wear masks. The federal government is expected to follow suit on Thursday, CNN reported today.

Los Angeles County and city officials also renewed indoor mask mandates in mid-July. Yolo and Ventura counties have followed suit.

While California has largely followed CDC guidelines throughout the pandemic, it was unclear today what action the state will take. Under the state’s current mask guidelines, vaccinated people do not have to wear masks indoors except on public transit and in settings including hospitals, schools, prisons, nursing homes and homeless shelters.

“We are doing a full review of the updated recommendations released by the CDC today and will evaluate existing guidance to determine the best path forward to protect Californians from the spread of COVID-19 and the highly contagious Delta variant,” the California Department of Public Health said in an emailed statement. “People who are not vaccinated are driving up cases
and hospitalizations in California, and we urge everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated now so we can keep our kids in school and businesses open.”

The mask guidelines were prompted by new evidence showing that the Delta variant may be more likely than other variants to cause breakthrough cases in vaccinated people, and those people may still carry large quantities of the virus that can be passed to others, said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky. But she also noted that such breakthrough cases remain rare.

In California, about 21,000 breakthrough cases have been identified among nearly 21 million fully vaccinated people - just .1%, according to state health data.

Some public health experts were relieved by the CDC’s reversal today after criticizing its previous guidance, issued before the Delta variant became predominant, as misguided.

“The CDC’s decision in May to apply one size fits all mask guidance regardless of vaccines or prevalence was always a bad one for this exact reason: every community is different, and public health should be flexible enough to accommodate those distinctions,” University of Saskatchewan virologist Angela Rasmussen tweeted today. “By oversimplifying complex and uncertain situations ... we will not convince people to wear masks if they weren’t already or persuade skeptics to get vaccinated.”

Barbara Feder Ostrov

Barbara Feder Ostrov, Contributing Writer for CalMatters, has reported on medicine and health policy for more than 15 years. She most recently covered California and national health issues for Kaiser Health... More by Barbara Feder Ostrov

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CDC recommends masks indoors in U.S. where cases are surging

By Melissa Healy, Chris Megerian

The CDC is expected to recommend that even vaccinated people wear masks indoors in parts of the U.S. where the coronavirus is surging.
In a move that mirrors a reversal in the nation’s pandemic recovery, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday recommended a return to indoor masking in public settings even for vaccinated Americans in places experiencing “substantial” or “high” coronavirus transmission rates.

The CDC also signaled that schools should implement universal face-covering policies for students and teachers regardless of their vaccination status.

The recommendations apply to counties where infection rates are higher than 50 new cases per day per 100,000 residents. That currently applies to roughly two-thirds of the nation’s counties, some of which have seen infection rates surpass 300 new cases per 100,000 people.

Los Angeles County is one of them, according to the CDC’s COVID Data Tracker. County health officials instituted a universal indoor mask mandate 10 days ago in an attempt to reverse an alarming increase in infections.
The federal turnabout comes just 10 weeks after the CDC declared it was safe for fully vaccinated Americans to stop wearing masks in most indoor settings. It reflects rising concern that the highly transmissible Delta variant is not only spreading rapidly among the unvaccinated but is also capable of being spread by immunized people who experience so-called **breakthrough infections**.

“This is not a decision we have made lightly,” said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the CDC. She cited “new science” showing that the Delta variant “behaves uniquely different from past strains” in its ability to spread among vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

Those data, collected since January 2021, have not yet emerged from the CDC or the labs it works with. Instead, Walensky said, she is relying on research that has found that viral loads in some vaccinated people with asymptomatic Delta infections “are quite similar” to those of infected people who have not been vaccinated. Viral loads are a reliable proxy for a person’s ability to transmit the virus.

Medical and public health experts who have seen the emerging evidence “universally said this required action,” Walensky said, adding that she reluctantly agreed.

“I know this is not a welcome piece of news,” Walensky said. “Not only are people tired, they’re frustrated.”
President Biden learned of the new guidance on Tuesday morning, when he was briefed on the matter by Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s leading infectious disease doctor, according to White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki.

Psaki defended public health officials for changing their guidance on masking “based on evolving data.”

“That’s what they should be doing,” she said.

The CDC’s new guidance comes amid the nation’s fifth substantial upturn in coronavirus infections since the SARS-CoV-2 virus began its spread across the nation in March 2020.

In the last week, the country has seen close to 58,000 new infections reported daily, and more than 80% of those cases are thought to be caused by the Delta variant.
Those infections are overwhelmingly reported in people who have not been vaccinated with any of the three COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use in the U.S. Compared with the more than 163 million Americans who are fully vaccinated, those who are unvaccinated are thought to be seven times more likely to develop COVID-19 symptoms and 20 times more likely to be hospitalized with the disease or die.

The CDC’s early efforts to track infections in fully vaccinated people suggest that breakthrough cases are rare. But they can be serious: As of July 19, 5,914 patients from 49 states have been hospitalized or died despite being vaccinated.

Tracking asymptomatic breakthrough infections is a more difficult task, because vaccinated people who are not sick probably would not be tested. That makes it challenging to gauge how often people with breakthrough infections might spread the virus to others.

SCIENCE

Rare ‘breakthrough’ COVID cases are causing alarm, confusion

July 21, 2021
Walensky said the CDC is closely tracking 10 large study populations of healthcare professionals, essential workers and residents of long-term residential care facilities to glean how common such transmission events are. That data will be released soon, she promised.

She said the new mask recommendations were particularly important in circumstances under which vaccinated people are in contact with others who are medically fragile or have compromised immune systems. In areas where transmission rates are substantial, for instance, relatives visiting loved ones in nursing homes should consider covering their faces.

“Part of this guidance is to make sure we can protect” these vulnerable people, she said.

Also potentially vulnerable are millions of children who will return to classrooms in a matter of weeks without the protection of vaccines. The Food and Drug Administration has not yet authorized any COVID-19 vaccines for children younger than 12. And to date, fewer than 3% of adolescents who are eligible for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine have received both doses.
Still, the recommendations that most students and their teachers wear face coverings regardless of their vaccination status is likely to be deeply unpopular in districts across the country. In California, a universal mask mandate for schools quickly became a political hot potato.

**California considers indoor mask rules after CDC’s recommendation**

July 27, 2021

When the CDC withdrew its indoor mask recommendation for fully vaccinated people in mid-May, new infections were running at about 36,000 cases per day nationwide and more than 2.2 million Americans were getting COVID-19 shots daily. Public health officials hoped that the prospect of going maskless would induce vaccine holdouts to roll up their sleeves.

It didn’t work. New vaccinations continued a downward trend in late May and have plateaued across the country since early July. As of Tuesday, only 49.2% of Americans are fully vaccinated, fewer than 500,000 people are being vaccinated per day, and resistance to the shots among those who have held out has hardened.
Biden may try to nudge those numbers upward by using his powers as chief executive to require all federal workers and contractors to either get vaccinated or submit to regular coronavirus testing, a more onerous prospect.

The CDC’s recommendations are advisory, so state and local authorities are not compelled to adopt or reinstate mask mandates. But they do reflect concern on the part of federal public health officials that the Delta variant’s untrammeled spread will thwart their efforts to bring the pandemic to a close.

Eight states, including California, Nevada, Washington and New York, require unvaccinated people to wear face coverings in most indoor settings. In several states, including Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Tennessee and Texas, governors or legislatures have barred local authorities from instituting mask rules on their own.

SCIENCE

Vaccine ‘obstinance’ is fueling Delta variant’s spread across America

July 16, 2021
Walensky acknowledged the limits of the CDC’s powers in the face of stiff political opposition.

“It’s always a personal choice as to whether someone wears a mask,” she said, and those who choose not to do so should not be stigmatized.

David Tannenbaum, a health messaging expert at the University of Utah, said that appealing to people’s desire to protect others is a better strategy than shaming.

Health officials “should always be focusing on the idea that getting vaccinated is not just a personal choice,” but something done to protect loved ones and the community, he said. “That’s hopefully more motivating to people.”

Pressed Tuesday on whether Americans will feel “whiplash” from changing recommendations, Psaki said the administration was acting “to save lives.”

“We’re not saying that wearing a mask is convenient, or people feel like it,” Psaki said. “But we’re telling you that’s the way to protect yourself, protect your loved ones, and that’s why the CDC is issuing this guidance.”

The new guidelines have already had an impact in the corridors of power.
The District of Columbia has been designated a place of substantial transmission. As a result, the White House is requiring all visitors and employees to wear masks inside the building. Biden is expected to follow suit.
Do I need to wear a mask indoors in my community? Rules vary across California
One-third of California counties are now urging even fully vaccinated people to wear masks indoors as coronavirus cases continue to rise across the state.

In some areas, the renewed call for indoor face coverings applies to everyone. In at least one county, health officials say those who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, or live with someone who is, should consider masking up.

And in Los Angeles County, indoor masking isn’t voluntary — it’s now the law.

The proliferation of new mask recommendations illustrates how rapidly the pandemic trajectory has shifted in the aftermath of California’s June 15 reopening, and how officials are increasingly turning to a familiar tool in hopes of blunting transmission.

About 60% of Californians now live in a county that either recommends or requires indoor masking for all individuals, including those vaccinated for COVID-19.

Here is a rundown:

**Mandatory masks**

Of California’s 58 counties, only L.A. County has mandated that masks be worn indoors.

The cities of Pasadena and Long Beach, which have their own independent health departments, have said they will follow suit.
**Recommended masks**

L.A. County was at the forefront of the new push for wider indoor masking — recommending in late June that all residents wear masks in public indoor spaces, regardless of whether they’ve been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Since then, 18 more counties have issued similar guidance, with many citing the proliferation of the highly infectious Delta variant as a reason.

Just this week, Santa Barbara, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Ventura, Lake and San Joaquin joined the list of counties asking even fully vaccinated individuals to wear face coverings as a precaution while inside places including grocery stores, movie theaters and retail outlets.

Most of the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as Sacramento, Yolo and Fresno counties, also now recommend that people wear masks indoors.

Stanislaus County issued a more targeted recommendation, saying, “If you or someone in your household is 65 or older, has risk factors for COVID-19, or has any conditions or medications that lower your immune system, thereby lowering your chances of developing immunity from the vaccine, Public Health recommends wearing a mask indoors.”

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**California**

Vaccines are incredibly effective against Delta variant. So why do we need to wear masks indoors?

*July 19, 2021*

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**Other areas**

So far, Orange County, San Bernardino and Riverside counties have not announced any new recommendations on indoor mask wearing.
What’s the reasoning for masking again?

Health officials have characterized the renewed calls for indoor masking as an effective but unobtrusive tactic to tamp down coronavirus transmission, which has risen rapidly following California’s June 15 reopening.

Over the last week, California has reported an average of 3,671 new cases per day — more than quadruple the number from a month ago.

People who have been vaccinated have strong protection against even the Delta variant, but those without vaccinations are at highest risk.

“This [masking] just levels the playing field. It does provide protection for everyone,” L.A. County health officer Dr. Muntu Davis said last week.

Another increasingly pressing issue is the continued circulation of the Delta variant — which is believed to be twice as transmissible as the conventional coronavirus strains.

Since its presence was confirmed in California in April, Delta has rapidly become the state’s dominant strain, accounting for 48.8% of all cases analyzed in June.
**Enforcement**

Technically, those who violate the new L.A. County mask rules, or any other provisions included in the county’s latest health order, can be cited or fined.

Practically speaking, many health and law enforcement officials favor educating residents about the rules and urging adherence rather than writing tickets.

L.A. County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said his department “will not expend our limited resources and instead ask for voluntary compliance” with the new rules.

County officials also have indicated they won’t take a punitive approach to bare-faced scofflaws, with Davis saying, “We will continue to go out and educate. It’s not something we really want to have to do, in terms of giving citations.”

The Los Angeles Police Department is urging residents to adhere to the new order, which went into effect at 11:59 p.m. Saturday after a drastic increase in the number of coronavirus cases in the last few weeks.

“The department continues to ask all Angelenos to abide by the mask mandate, recognizing that the recent resurgence is troubling,” LAPD Chief Michel Moore said Monday. “These hospitalizations and this loss of life are real. Our personnel will wear masks in all public settings, as well as in office settings, and I’m asking all Angelenos to comply with it.”
What’s next?

Officials hope that masking up in indoor public areas will slow the spread.

It will take weeks to know for sure. L.A. County officials have said they could impose more restrictions if conditions worsen but have not provided details.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday that the state is “committed to addressing this latest increase in the number of new cases” but also “committed not to imposing new restrictions.”

Despite the decisions being made at the local level, both the California Department of Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention maintain that fully vaccinated people can go without masks in most situations, given the high level of protection the shots provide.
Counties of Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz recommend indoor masking in public places as extra protection against increases in COVID-19.

With cases of COVID-19 rising locally and increased reports of the very infectious Delta variant, the Counties of...
Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors in public places. Out of an abundance of caution, people are recommended to wear masks indoors in places like grocery or retail stores, theaters, and family entertainment centers, even if they are fully vaccinated.

Businesses are urged to adopt universal masking requirements for customers entering indoor areas of their businesses to provide better protection to their employees and customers. This will also make it easier for businesses to be sure unvaccinated people are masked. Workplaces must comply with Cal/OSHA requirements.

The Health Officers of Monterey, Napa, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties state that the Delta variants are spreading quickly in this area and that COVID-19 hospitalizations among the unvaccinated are increasing. The Delta variants are easier to pass from person to person. The Health Officers urge everyone to take action to protect themselves and others by getting vaccinated and wearing a mask indoors and in crowded settings. In June, the Delta variants comprised 43 percent of all specimens sequenced in California. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted that Delta variants are now responsible for 58 percent of new infections across the country.

Fully vaccinated people are well-protected from infections and serious illness due to COVID-19 including the Delta variants. Vaccinating as many people as possible, as soon as possible, continues to be our best defense against severe COVID-19 infection and the harm it can do to our region. Vaccines are very effective, free, and widely...
available to everyone 12 years and older. Visit www.myturn.ca.gov or call 2-1-1 to find a vaccination site near you.

In the coming weeks, the Health Officers will revisit the recommendation for everyone to mask indoors in public settings as they continue to monitor transmission rates, hospitalizations, deaths, and increasing vaccination rates throughout the region. Data can be monitored here: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view.
All faculty, staff and students across the California State University system will have to be vaccinated against the coronavirus to go on campuses in the fall, officials announced Tuesday, July 27, though the system will allow for medical and religious exemptions.

The dates by which people must provide certification of vaccination will vary by campus because of differing academic calendars, according to a CSU statement, but every campus will require it before Oct. 1.

The news came two weeks after the University of California system announced it would also require COVID-19 vaccinations for students, faculty and staff on campus, with limited exceptions.

The California State University system first announced it would require COVID-19 vaccinations in April — but at the time, officials said the mandate would only be put in place if one of the vaccines received full approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The UC's initial policy also required full FDA approval.

That still hasn't happened; the agency has only granted each of the three currently available vaccines with emergency use authorizations.

The CSU's Tuesday statement said the system was moving ahead with the requirement without full FDA approval "because of evolving circumstances."

CSU Chancellor Joseph I. Castro cited the growth in cases as the delta variant — which is much more easily transmissible than other strains — continues spreading.
“The current surge in COVID cases due to the spread of the highly infectious Delta variant is an alarming new factor that we must consider,” he said in a statement, “as we look to maintain the health and well-being of students, employees and visitors to our campuses this fall.”

The CSU — based in Long Beach — boasts nearly 500,000 students across 23 universities, including in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Fullerton.

Most campuses will offer more virtual courses than they did before the pandemic, which should provide increased flexibility for students who do not wish to be on campus. But “resource limitations do not allow for a campus’ or even a program’s full offerings to be made available virtually,” the CSU statement said.

The system will finalize its policy later this week, said CSU spokeswoman Toni Molle. The policy will “suggest a framework” for implementing the requirement, Molle said, and each campus will develop its own plan based on that framework. Decisions on additional health measures, like masking or distancing requirements, will be left to individual campuses.

“Receiving a COVID vaccine continues to be the best way to mitigate the spread of the virus,” Castro said. “We urge all members of the CSU community to get vaccinated as soon as possible, and announcing this requirement now allows members of the CSU community to receive multiple doses of a vaccine as we head into the beginning of the fall term.”

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**Hayley Munguia | Reporter**

Hayley received her bachelor's degree in New Media Journalism from New York University in 2015 and worked as a data reporter and social media editor for the politics and sports website FiveThirtyEight before working at the Southern California News Group. She grew up in Austin, Texas.

hmunguia@scng.com

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L.A. will require city employees to get vaccinated or regularly tested for COVID-19
Los Angeles will require city employees to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or undergo weekly testing to show they have tested negative, Mayor Eric Garcetti and City Council President Nury Martinez announced Tuesday. Garcetti, announcing the new requirements, cited “an alarming spike in cases among our city workforce.”

The plan is expected to be rolled out through a mayoral order issued Wednesday, following a meeting of a city committee focused on employee relations that will discuss how the new requirements will be implemented.
Martinez expressed deep frustration with the rebound in infections, saying that Angelenos who had stayed inside to protect themselves and others were “getting tired of protecting people who don’t want to protect themselves.”

“We need unvaccinated Angelenos to stop dragging their feet,” Martinez said. “As the largest employer in the city of Los Angeles, this is us doing our part.”

Many details about the plan remain to be worked out, but city departments will be directed to gather and report information about whether their employees are vaccinated by Aug. 13, Garcetti spokesman Alex Comisar said.

The announcement comes one day after California officials said state and healthcare employees would soon be required to show proof they’ve been vaccinated or undergo regular testing for COVID-19. New York City declared similar plans.

San Francisco and Pasadena have also announced future vaccination requirements for their employees; both cities have hitched their requirements to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granting formal approval to at least one of the COVID-19 vaccines now under emergency authorization.

L.A. could eventually mandate COVID-19 vaccination for city employees without offering testing as an alternative; Garcetti and the council will pursue a vaccine mandate once the FDA grants full approval, the mayor said in a statement.

As the Delta variant has swept through Los Angeles and infection numbers have resurged, a growing number of L.A. politicians have argued that it is time for the city to impose such a requirement. Lagging vaccination rates among police officers and firefighters, in particular, have spurred concern because those workers interact regularly with the public.
“Plain and simple — vaccinations are the only way out of this pandemic,” Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas said in a statement late Monday, announcing that he would soon introduce a motion to draw up a policy requiring all city employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

“If we want our economy to fully recover, if we want our children to be able to go to school without masks on, and if we want the most vulnerable members of our community to not end up in the hospital, we must all do our part and this motion is a step in the right direction,” Ridley-Thomas said. “It’s time to get it done.”

Ahead of the L.A. announcement, Long Beach announced a similar plan, with Mayor Robert Garcia saying city employees will need to be vaccinated or show a weekly negative COVID-19 test.

Over the past week, Los Angeles County has reported an average of nearly 2,300 new cases per day, nine times the level seen a month ago, according to data compiled by The Times.
On Monday, 891 coronavirus-positive patients were hospitalized countywide, with 195 in intensive care. Both figures have doubled in just the past two weeks. During the height of the last surge, an average of roughly 15,000 new cases were reported every day, and more than 8,000 COVID-19 patients were hospitalized.

LAPD Chief Michel Moore on Tuesday told the civilian Police Commission that the department had 33 personnel test positive for the coronavirus in the last week — a sharp uptick from recent weeks. One LAPD employee was hospitalized with COVID-19 and in “very critical condition,” Moore said.

Under the plan announced Tuesday, the heads of L.A. city departments will have to verify and track whether their employees are vaccinated and submit reports to the personnel department. If employees do not provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination, they must show on a weekly basis that they tested negative for the virus.

When New York announced this week that city workers would soon need to show proof of vaccination or undergo weekly testing, some employee unions bristled.

Oren Barzilay — president of FDNY EMS Local 2057, representing New York City fire inspectors, emergency medical technicians and paramedics — said the union was “strongly opposed to these new workplace mandates being forced upon all 4,300 of our
members,” arguing that “the city and the mayor cannot simply disregard the civil liberties of the workforce.”

In Los Angeles, one union leader welcomed the new requirement.

The Tuesday announcement “is a practical first step toward ensuring city employees can remain safe on the job and continue delivering the critical services Angelenos depend on,” said SEIU Local 721 president David Green, whose union represents a range of city employees, including custodians, sanitation workers and mechanics.

The L.A. firefighters union, whose president said Monday that it did not support a mandatory policy, did not immediately weigh in on the announcement. And a spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Protective League said it was waiting on more information to evaluate the plan.

Courts have in the past upheld laws requiring compulsory vaccination: In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld state laws that require vaccination for communicable diseases. The case stemmed from a Massachusetts law that permitted city health boards to enforce mandatory, free vaccination requirements for adults over 21.

In a 7-2 decision, Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote that “the rights of the individual ... may at times, under the pressure of great dangers, be subjected to such restraint, to
be enforced by reasonable regulations, as the safety of the general public may demand.”

Legal experts said many of the specific questions surrounding COVID-19 vaccination requirements are being hashed out in court.

Healthcare and child-care workers have frequently been required to have certain immunizations, but broader rules covering all employees have been less common in recent history, generally because people are expected to have been vaccinated against illnesses as children, said Lindsay Wiley, a professor at American University Washington College of Law.

Wiley said those who have challenged COVID-19 rules have argued that government agencies cannot mandate a vaccination that has emergency authorization, rather than formal FDA approval, and that such rules violate individual rights or infringe on religious liberty.

CALIFORNIA

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July 27, 2021
Although those questions are still being “actively litigated,” Wiley said, courts have not seemed very receptive to those arguments. In New Mexico, a federal judge declined to immediately block a COVID-19 vaccination requirement that covered firefighters, officers at detention centers and other workers in Doña Ana County while a legal challenge is pending.

Richard W. Warren, a Detroit-based lawyer who represents employers throughout the country, said district judges in Texas and Indiana have recently rejected challenges to mandated COVID-19 vaccinations — one by a hospital; the other by a university.

“Not a single decision that I have seen treated the vaccine differently because it has only been conditionally approved,” Warren said.

Warren said exemptions must be made, however, for workers with disabilities or religious beliefs against vaccination, and employers can ask workers for notes from physicians or pastors to be excused from a requirement.
In May, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said federal law permits private employers to require that workers be vaccinated, as long as there are accommodations for disabilities and religious beliefs.

“Federal EEO laws do not prevent an employer from requiring all employees physically entering the workplace to be vaccinated for COVID-19, so long as employers comply with the reasonable accommodation provisions of the ADA and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other EEO considerations,” the commission said.

*Times staff writer Kevin Rector contributed to this report.*
San Diego County asks all residents to mask indoors, whether vaccinated or not
Local officials are endorsing — but not mandating — indoor masking following new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

San Diego County officials asked everyone — fully vaccinated or not — to wear masks in indoor public spaces to slow the spread of the coronavirus, echoing a plea issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention earlier Tuesday.
Unlike Los Angeles County, local officials aren’t mandating indoor masking, simply recommending it. But the new announcement still marks a shift from the county’s message over the past few weeks, during which it has encouraged San Diegans to get vaccinated while asserting that wearing facial coverings is a personal choice.

The news comes hours after the CDC reversed guidance it issued in May, when it said that fully vaccinated people could shed masks in nearly all indoor settings. The rise of the fast-spreading Delta variant of the coronavirus, which now accounts for about 80 percent of new cases across the U.S., called for a change in tactics, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the agency, told reporters. She cited new research suggesting that some fully vaccinated individuals who get infected by the virus carry high enough levels of it to make them infectious.

“This new science is worrisome and, unfortunately, warrants an update to our recommendations,” Walensky said. “The Delta variant is showing every day its willingness to outsmart us, and to be an opportunist in areas where we have not shown a fortified response against it.”

The agency is asking all Americans living in areas where the spread of the coronavirus is substantial or high to wear masks in indoor public spaces, such as stores, schools and other settings where people who don’t live with each other get together.
The guidance applies to any county that has had 50 or more new infections per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. San Diego County easily meets that threshold. According to the latest data available on the CDC’s online data tracker, the county logged about 130 cases per 100,000 residents from July 19 to 25, qualifying as an area where the spread of the virus is high.

In recent weeks, the number of new COVID-19 cases in San Diego County has risen rapidly, mirroring state and nationwide trends. In late June, it was common for the county to report 100 or fewer cases each day. But now, 400 or more daily cases has become the norm, with county officials reporting that they were notified of 1,264 cases on Friday, the highest count since Feb. 5. Hospitalizations have risen, too, with 200 San Diegans in the hospital due to coronavirus infections as of last week, compared to around 70 residents a month ago.

On Tuesday, the region reported 720 new infections, 24 more hospitalizations and 5 COVID-19 deaths, based on a comparison of the latest totals for each of these categories to yesterday’s counts. The county’s coronavirus dashboard notes that the actual number of new cases may differ slightly, as the county occasionally finds and removes non-COVID cases from these figures.

As of early Tuesday evening, guidelines from the California Department of Public Health had not been updated to match the CDC’s new stance, despite Gov. Gavin Newsom saying around noon that the state would issue a statement within a “number of hours.”

Instead, CDPH sent The San Diego Union-Tribune an email saying the agency is conducting “a full review of the updated recommendations released by the CDC today.
and will evaluate existing guidance to determine the best path forward to protect Californians from the spread of COVID-19 and the highly contagious Delta variant.”

Experts such as Susan Kiene, a global health specialist at San Diego State University, have been deeply concerned by the ongoing surge and were relieved to see the new CDC guidelines.

“I absolutely agree that this was the right call,” said Kiene in an email. “We need every tool we have right now to address the rising numbers of cases and hospitalizations. While we still want everyone to get vaccinated, indoor masking is a simple, easy, yet effective prevention measure that everyone can take to reduce risk for themselves and others until case rates and transmission rates decline.”

An infectious disease model generated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation shows that masking could dramatically slow the spread of the virus in the coming months. But the model assumes a 95 percent masking rate, and, while one study of U.S. retail shoppers reports that masking rates reached 90 percent during the summer of 2020, it’s unclear whether such high compliance rates are still feasible given widespread fatigue and frustration with public health precautions.

But Jerry Sanders, former mayor of San Diego and current CEO of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, thinks many business owners won’t mind the new
guidance. After all, he says, a facial covering is far less burdensome than being told to shut down or operate at 50 percent capacity, and masking up could prevent the region from ever returning to strict lockdowns.

“It’s really not a major step,” Sanders said. “I think it’s pretty cautionary, and I think it’s something that the business community will embrace. A lot of livelihoods are at stake. And if the difference is (between) wearing a mask and slowing down, I think that’s what we need to do.”

Marco Li Mandri, chief executive administrator of the Little Italy Association, which represents the owners, residents and businesses of the downtown neighborhood, echoed that message. Li Mandri added that as long as restaurants can serve patrons outdoors without capacity limits or masking requirements, he doesn’t expect restaurateurs to bristle at the new guidance.

“We know the virus is not gone,” he said. “That’s the key thing. It’s changing its form and content and we have to do what we can to stop it. Until it gets stopped, it’s going to impact negatively the entire economy. I think most of the restaurants in Little Italy will say the same thing.”

The latest guidance is new enough that many employers are still figuring out how to respond. A spokesperson for the city of San Diego, the largest city in the county, said the
city is currently in discussions around requiring all employees to wear masks. Spokespersons for the next two largest cities, Chula Vista and Oceanside, said that they’re currently only requiring city employees who aren’t fully vaccinated or who’ve declined to share their vaccination status to wear facial coverings indoors.

The U-T reached out to the state’s department of industrial relations, which runs the division of occupational safety and health, also known as Cal/OSHA, to ask if the agency will alter its masking policy for the state’s businesses. A spokesperson responded that the department would provide additional information on Wednesday. Cal/OSHA had initially considered requiring all employees to wear masks indoors unless everyone has been fully vaccinated, but the agency backtracked after intense public backlash, instead aligning with CDC and CDPH guidelines.

During the CDC briefing, Walensky reiterated that vaccines are still safe and highly effective against the virus, noting that those who aren’t fully vaccinated are about seven times more likely to get sick with COVID-19 and 20 times more likely to end up in the
hospital compared to people who’ve gotten two doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

“This moment, and, most importantly, the associated illness, suffering and death could have been avoided with higher vaccination coverage in the country,” Walensky said.

Olivia Stafford feels the same way — even though the 28-year-old Normal Heights resident, who works in public relations, tested positive for the coronavirus last week despite being fully vaccinated. She’s been feeling tired, feverish, congested and has yet to fully recover her sense of smell, but she knows things could have been worse, especially since she has an autoimmune disease.

“I am so thankful that I did decide to get the vaccine because it was still bad with the vaccine, and I can’t imagine how I would have felt if I didn’t have it,” Stafford said. “It just makes me worried for people that are feeling hesitant for whatever reason.”
White House considering vaccine mandate for federal workers
WASHINGTON — The White House is strongly considering requiring federal employees to show proof they've been vaccinated against COVID-19 or otherwise submit to regular testing and wear a mask — a potentially major shift in policy that reflects growing concerns about the spread of the more infectious Delta variant.

The possible vaccine mandate for federal employees — regardless of the rate of transmission in their area — is one option under consideration by the Biden administration, according to a person familiar with the plans who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss deliberations that have yet to be made public. The White House is expected to announce its final decision after completing a policy review this week.

President Biden suggested Tuesday that expanding that mandate to the entire federal workforce was “under consideration,” but offered no further details. The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday became the first federal agency to require vaccinations, for its health workers.

The broader requirement under consideration would be the most significant shift by the Biden administration this week as the White House grapples with a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations nationwide driven by the spread of the Delta variant and breakthrough infections among vaccinated Americans.

On Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reversed its masking guidelines and said that all Americans living in areas with substantial or high coronavirus transmission rates should wear masks indoors, regardless of their vaccination status.

And just like that, masks were back at the White House.

By Tuesday afternoon, when the latest CDC data found that Washington, D.C., is facing substantial rates of transmission, White House workers were asked to begin wearing masks indoors starting Wednesday. Journalists
were asked to follow suit, and those staff and reporters remaining in the White House were already masking up.

An aide for Vice President Kamala Harris passed out masks to the reporters covering her events earlier that day, asking them to put them on before walking in to her meeting with Native American leaders on voting rights.

Biden dismissed concerns that the new masking guidance from the CDC could create confusion among Americans, saying those who remain unvaccinated are the ones who are “sowing enormous confusion.”

“The more we learn, the more we learn about this virus and the Delta variation, the more we have to be worried and concerned. And there’s only one thing we know for sure: If those other 100 million people got vaccinated, we’d be in a very different world,” he told reporters after speaking to intelligence community employees at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Tuesday.

But the whiplash on masking and vaccinations — just the day before, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki had avoided questions over why the administration had yet to require vaccines for federal workers — reflects the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus.

Various state and local governments, private companies, hospital administrators and universities across the nation have reverted to indoor mask mandates and instituted vaccine mandates in recent months, but just 60% of American adults have been completely vaccinated, and the latest wave of the coronavirus is hitting those communities with low vaccination rates particularly hard. The nation is averaging more than 57,000 cases a day and 24,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations.

But the Biden administration had thus far avoided embracing a vaccine mandate for its own employees — in part because officials are wary of further politicizing an already fraught issue by coming down too hard on the side of vaccine mandates.
Psaki acknowledged Tuesday that administration officials are aware of the risk that Biden’s support for vaccine mandates could harden opposition to vaccines among his detractors.

“The president certainly recognizes that he is not always the right voice to every community about the benefits of getting vaccinated, which is why we have invested as much as we have in local voices and empowering local, trusted voices,” she said.
A third dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine can “strongly” boost protection against the Delta variant — beyond the protection afforded by the standard two doses, suggests new data released by Pfizer on Wednesday.

The data posted online, which are expected to be discussed in a company earnings call on Wednesday morning, suggest that antibody levels against the Delta variant in people ages 18 to 55 who receive a third dose of vaccine are greater than five-fold than following a second dose.

Among people ages 65 to 85, the Pfizer data suggest that antibody levels against the Delta variant after receiving a third dose of vaccine are greater than 11-fold than following a second dose.

There’s “estimated potential for up to 100-fold increase in Delta neutralization post-dose three compared to pre-dose three,” researchers wrote in the Pfizer data slides.

The data have not yet been peer-reviewed or published.

The data also show that antibody levels are much higher after a third dose than a second dose against the original coronavirus variant and the Beta variant, first identified in South Africa.
$1,042 a month for 150 young adults: L.A. County pilot program approved
A pilot program will provide a guaranteed income of $1,204 a month to young adults in Los Angeles County.

The program, approved unanimously by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, will provide the payments for three years to 150 residents ages 18 to 24 who are receiving general relief benefits.

About a third of young people eligible for the program are homeless with no support system, according to the motion approved by the board.

Many are Black or Latino men with limited educational and career opportunities whose chances for success were further damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have recently come out of the foster care or probation systems.
The program’s proponents hope the money will help these young adults achieve financial stability, with the goal of becoming permanently self-sufficient.

“My hope is that this can narrow the wealth gap, ameliorate the immense harm caused by the pandemic, and set up these young people for success,” Hilda Solis, chair of the Board of Supervisors and author of the motion, said in a statement.

In May, the board approved another guaranteed income pilot program, providing $1,000 a month to 1,000 residents for at least three years as part of a “countywide poverty alleviation initiative.”

Universal basic income and guaranteed income programs have been gaining traction across the state, particularly during the pandemic.

Such programs have helped participants cover unexpected expenses and look for full-time jobs free of short-term financial pressure, Tuesday’s motion said.

The motion directs county officials to submit a detailed plan for the young adult pilot program within 45 days. The program will get off the ground soon after that, said Stephany Villaseñor, Solis’ communications director.

The $1,204 monthly payment, $201 of which is CalFresh food benefits, will supplement the county general relief payment of $221 a month.
It’s not clear yet how the 150 participants will be selected. They will receive job placement assistance and will be encouraged to take advantage of other employment, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship resources.

“Poverty is destructive. It can break spirits and destroy lives,” Supervisor Janice Hahn, a coauthor of the motion, said in a statement. “Government needs new and better strategies to stop the cycle of poverty and a guaranteed basic income program has real potential.”

Solis said she will “absolutely” pursue similar programs in the future.

“There are survivors of domestic violence, CalWorks recipients, undocumented residents, and so many others who deserve to benefit from such a program,” she said. CalWorks is a state program providing cash aid and services to families with children.
In Stockton, 130 residents received $500 a month for a year and a half beginning in 2019.

Compton has been giving 800 low-income residents $300 to $600 a month. The Compton Pledge is sponsored by the Fund for Guaranteed Income, a charity headed by Nika Soon-Shiong, daughter of Los Angeles Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong and a co-director of the Compton Pledge.

In April, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti proposed a $24-million Basic Income Guaranteed program that would give $1,000 a month to 2,000 families for a year.

This July, Long Beach launched a guaranteed income pilot program to provide $500 to 500 single-parent families each month for a year.
LA County approves $975 million spending plan for federal Rescue Act dollars

The spending plan is structured around equity efforts as the coronavirus outbreak took its toughest toll on communities of color.

(iStockphoto)

By RYAN CARTER | rcarter@scng.com | Daily News
PUBLISHED: July 27, 2021 at 5:41 p.m. | UPDATED: July 27, 2021 at 5:42 p.m.
The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, July 27, approved a $975 million spending plan for the county’s first chunk of American Rescue Act funding, to be used for a range of pandemic-era needs in the region.

The spending plan is structured around equity efforts as the coronavirus outbreak took its toughest toll on communities of color. The program is based on three “strategic pillars” that reflect the Board of Supervisors’ emphasis in investing in a “Better Than Before” recovery effort in the county.


Among the noteworthy spending segments:

– More than $468 million will go toward housing and related services for people experiencing homelessness and homeless prevention;

– More than $290 million will go to direct community investments and partnerships with community-based organizations;

– $12.5 million will support immigrants and immigrant-focused community-based organizations that provide a broad range of services, including from nutrition to childcare to health outreach; and

– $70 million will be aimed at small businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofits hit hard by the pandemic.

This funding is just phase one of a $1.9 billion allocation under the American Rescue Plan. The county is expecting the rest to come in May 2022.

Across L.A. County’s 88 cities, a total of more than $4.5 billion has been allocated through the Rescue Plan.
LA County public health director apologizes for ‘failures’ in responding to sewage spill

Ferrer’s comments came during a discussion on a report that detailed the severity of flooding that occurred at the Hyperion plant, near El Segundo, the ensuing sewage spill into the ocean and the delays in notifying the public.

Los Angeles County’s public health director apologized Tuesday, July 27, for what she said was an inadequate response to the sewage spill at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant earlier this month.

“I want to apologize to the board and the public for our failures at the Department of Public Health for not responding to this appropriately,” Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer told the LA County Board of Supervisors. “There aren’t any excuses. There were multiple failures. Most have already been fixed.”

Ferrer’s comments came during a discussion on a report that detailed the severity of flooding that occurred at the Hyperion plant, near El Segundo, the ensuing sewage spill into the ocean and the delays in notifying the public.

Trash and other debris began to overwhelm the plant around 2 p.m. By 8 p.m., plant managers made the decision to release the untreated sewage to prevent the facility, operated by LA Sanitation & Environment, from being completely flooded with waste. Roughly half the plant was flooded anyway.
The sewage was released from about 8 p.m. July 11 to 4 a.m. July 12, with 17 million gallons pouring into the ocean, forcing South Bay beaches to close for several days. But despite public health inspectors arriving at the plant within two hours of the sewage being released, signs alerting beachgoers did not get posted until around noon on July 12, and an official public notification and press release did not go online until around 5:30 p.m. that day.

Among the biggest mistakes, which Ferrer recognized in her public comments and the report detailed, came when a duty supervisor did not respond properly to initial reports shortly after the plant began releasing the raw sewage.

The report also said there were communication breakdowns, poor training and a lack of priority and “urgency” that plagued the response from the Department of Public Health.

A health department strike team, for example, called its supervisor around 11 p.m. July 11 to say “nothing more at the Plant was needed from them,” the report said, even though sewage would continue flowing into the ocean for the next five hours. And on Monday morning, the spill was not the focus of leadership meetings at the health department.

“An incident of this magnitude should have gone to a branch director immediately,” Ferrer said. “So the strike team should not have left (the plant) without reaching one of our branch managers, which means it would have automatically been raised at the morning meeting.”

Inspectors also may not have been fully trained on water pollution issues and relied too heavily on the plant staff, Ferrer said.

“There were lots of failures,” Ferrer said, “including the one you noted, where the person responding after hours failed to process the concern that was raised properly.”

But most of the concerns, Ferrer said, have already begun to be addressed. The department was improving training and making sure that one of four branch directors are rotating on-call duties to ensure “there is never a failure like this again,” Ferrer said.

LA County Supervisor Janice Hahn, who effectively was the first to announce the spill publicly through Twitter, said the response should have been faster. Even L.A. County Lifeguards learned about the spill through posted signs around and not through any official channels.
“This incident was considered by our environmental county health team to be an immediate beach closure event,” Hahn said Tuesday. “Immediate in this case should have meant 9 p.m. Sunday, July 11, when two environmental health inspectors arrived at the plant, witnessed half the plant overwhelmed with sewage and saw it going into the ocean.”

At issue, Hahn said, was the failure of the county to close the beaches and keep the public safe from potentially dangerous water.

“The failure to get that done raised questions for me,” Hahn said, “and the public deserves to know the answers.”

Levels of contaminants dropped below a level to allow beaches to reopen about four days after the spill, but the aftereffects — as plant officials make repairs to the facility — have lingered, including a stench caused by the work being done there that, Hahn said, has left nearby residents miserable.

“The whole plant has been flooded, the equipment has been compromised,” the supervisor said, "so I’m still concerned about our public's health in El Segundo and the surrounding area.”

Los Angeles city has offered hotel vouchers or air conditioning units for affected residents.

“Our Department of Public Health has to continually monitor the situation, to test the water, monitor the odor issue," Hahn said, "so residents can return home."

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LA County supervisors split over where to house juvenile offenders

Based on the board's vote, the Probation Department, working with the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Subcommittee and Youth Justice Advisory Committee, will consider and rank viable facilities.
The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors broke ranks on Tuesday, July 27, over where to house juvenile offenders set to be transferred from state to county custody beginning in 2023, with a 3-2 majority voting to rethink renovating camps in the Santa Clarita Valley for this purpose.

Supervisors Holly Mitchell and Sheila Kuehl failed to garner sufficient support for their proposal to create small group housing at Camps Scott and Scudder to allow for the kind of therapeutic, youth-focused treatment model that is employed at Camp Kilpatrick in Malibu.

A plan to temporarily house female youth at the Dorothy Kirby Center in Commerce, which was highlighted for its mental health resources, was also rejected.

All of those proposals were based on recommendations of the Probation Department’s Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Subcommittee, established to plan for the closure of the state’s Juvenile Justice Division.

Instead, the board approved a substitute motion by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Hilda Solis.

In doing so, the board agreed with Kuehl and Mitchell that male youth would be temporarily housed at Kilpatrick, but called for a reassessment of all other options for temporary and permanent housing.

Based on the board’s vote, the Probation Department, working with the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Subcommittee and Youth Justice Advisory Committee, will consider and rank viable facilities.

“Identifying multiple placement options for the Division of Juvenile Justice youth is essential to support individual success and to help these youth reach their best possible outcomes,” Barger said in a statement.

In her motion, Barger objected to the lack of community input. Santa Clarita’s city attorney has raised concerns about the county’s due diligence and potential failure in following California Environmental Quality Act regulations when considering locations.

Nicole Brown of the Urban Peace Institute pushed back hard against that characterization during her comments to the board.

“CEQA is a classic NIMBY move. I went to the (Santa Clarita) city council meeting. This is not about environmental concerns, this is about an outdated superpredator mindset about our youth of color and their families, and it is rooted in racism,” Brown said.
Kuehl said the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Subcommittee — which includes representatives from the offices of the district attorney and public defender, the courts, social services, mental health and the county’s office of education — had already conducted a thoughtful analysis. She warned that the delay would just harm youth already in custody.

Barger said she was “not requesting the subcommittee to start over,” but said she wanted to be at the front of a discussion focused on operational needs, noting that a majority of the county’s juvenile camps are in the Fifth District she represents.

Addressing claims that she was opposed to placements in her district, Barger said “nothing could be further from the truth.”

Supervisor Janice Hahn, who was the deciding vote, leaned into a two-month deadline set for additional analysis. Barger’s motion called for report back in 60 days.

“We like to get things right,” Hahn said. “We like to do our due diligence … especially for something that is so permanent and has so many lasting consequences.”
Over Villanueva’s objections, LA County supervisors advance bid to open sheriff’s department records

For months, Inspector General Max Huntsman has been calling on the department to allow his office access to computer records that include body-worn camera video for the purpose of reviewing Sheriff department conduct and oversight.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, July 27, approved an effort to open up Sheriff’s Department database records to the county’s Inspector General’s Office and other agencies, despite angry pushback from Sheriff Alex Villanueva, who called the county’s watchdog “corrupt” and the effort itself “utter nonsense.”

For months, Inspector General Max Huntsman has been calling on the department to allow his office access to computer records that include body-worn camera video for the purpose of reviewing Sheriff department conduct and oversight.

The board — by a vote of 4-0, with Supervisor Kathryn Barger abstaining — approved a motion at Tuesday’s meeting that called for access to such records, prompted by “continued complaints and concerns raised by families whose loved ones were killed by LA County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) deputies.”

A Board of Supervisors motion at Tuesday’s meeting called for access to such records, prompted by “continued complaints and concerns raised by families whose loved ones were killed by L.A. County Sheriff’s Department deputies.” The measure calls for a report back in 60 days on the feasibility of its efforts.

Community members say such actions by deputies have ranged from mocking statements to more serious incidents of harassment.
In May, the board approved an OIG report looking into such complaints, but officials say there were “barriers to the OIG’s ability to comply with the board’s directive.”

Prompted by those hurdles, the board pushed harder on Tuesday to require the Sheriff’s Department to allow direct access for the OIG to the Performance Recording and Monitoring System database and body-worn camera videos. The mission: “(T)o fulfill its obligations as directed by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors per the May 4, 2021 motion,” according to the statement from the OIG’s office.

“The board needs to continue to stand up for our impacted residents by moving forward on these and other recommendations,” read the motion from the board’s agenda, introduced by supervisors Hilda Solis and Holly Mitchell.

If approved, the board’s action would theoretically allow access to the cloud-based storage system for body-worn camera video, evidence.com, to the OIG, the Public Defender’s Office, Alternate Public Defender, the District Attorney’s Office, and other county justice departments as part of a contract between the county’s Internal Services Department and private vendor Axon Enterprises, Inc.

It would also, if necessary, allow additional licenses to be issued to evidence.com, a privately owned repository for evidence from law-enforcement investigations, so it can be shared by other county justice departments.

But on Tuesday, Villanueva cautioned that if approved, the action would be tied up in the courts, saying that the board is up against 50 years of case law that does not give the county the authority to alter such contracts.

Villanueva called the effort “legislative extortion,” adding that the majority of deputy-involved shootings involved situations in which the deputy’s life was in danger. He said in such cases, “victims” of such shootings are not victims, they are suspects.

But that brought a sharp retort from Stephanie Luna, an aunt of 21-year-old Anthony Vargas, who was shot by deputies in 2018. According to LASD reports, two deputies investigating reports of an an armed robbery shot Vargas 13 times in August of 2018 after a struggle during which Vargas pulled a gun from his waistband. A District Attorney’s investigation cleared the deputies, determining that they acted in defense of themselves and others in the area. Vargas’ family subsequently filed a wrongful-death lawsuit.

“My nephew is not a suspect. He is a victim,” Luna said Tuesday, citing what she called Villanueva’s “blatant disregard” for the rights of her nephew and a “systematic problem” within the department.

“They are victims because they were killed,” added an indignant Mitchell.

“That’s what constitutes the term victim,” Mitchell added. “To make the global statement that they were suspect and therefore deserve than less than humane treatment by officers who took an oath to protect and serve all equally, I found deeply offensive.”

Luna and others have alleged that they have been faced harassment by deputies. A May report by the National Lawyers Guild of Los Angeles detailed allegations such LASD patrol cars driving “slowly past family members’ homes or park outside their homes on an almost daily basis, a phenomenon that only arose after Anthony’s death,” according to the report.

The report said harassment of families people killed by deputies has discouraged many from speaking out about such shootings.

In cases noted in the report, the district attorney’s office concluded following investigations that the deputies acted lawfully during shootings. In those cases, however, families had filed lawsuits against the individual deputies, the county and the Sheriff’s Department.

Barger, too, slammed Villanueva’s words as “totally inappropriate” and “unfortunate.”

But Barger also raised questions that underpinned her vote to abstain.

County Counsel Rodrigo A. Castro-Silva said the OIG has full access to Sheriff’s Department records, but that the office is limited by codes that restrain him from “obstructing” the sheriff’s investigations. He noted there is state law that limits access to some information, so the board’s motion can only go so far as permitted by law.

Castro-Silva cited a state law that authorizes the chair of the a county oversight board and the inspector general to issue a subpoena to investigate a matter within their jurisdiction.

Barger wasn’t quite ready to say yes and wanted more time to weigh the item.

Tension over oversight of the Sheriff’s Department has continued to intensify in recent months. .

In a blunt, sweeping letter released Friday, June 18, Huntsman demanded the release of a litany of oversight information that he said the department has “significantly and intentionally impeded.”

The demands, itemized in the 13-page letter to Villanueva dated June 15, chronicle what Huntsman alleged were more than two dozen instances over two years of the department’s defiance. They range from refusal to comply with Huntsman’s document and information requests to the blocking of access to body-worn camera footage.
Keurig factory workers in Victorville vote to unionize: ‘We’re not standing for this anymore’

Charlie McGee  Victorville Daily Press
Published 3:45 p.m. PT Jul. 27, 2021 | Updated 4:19 p.m. PT Jul. 27, 2021

Keurig Dr Pepper Inc. workers in Victorville have narrowly voted to unionize under the Teamsters, and organizers say company pushback suggests that tough talks lie ahead to reach the factory’s first collective bargaining agreement.

With a vote count certified Friday by the National Labor Relations Board, 266 workers at the Victorville factory are set to join Teamsters Local 896, according to the NLRB website. The vote was 129-112, with a few workers not participating. It applies to full- and part-time hourly employees in warehouse, quality control, production and maintenance roles.

Before negotiations between the union and Keurig Dr Pepper begin, the company gets a chance to issue any challenges it may have to the election results. The Teamsters say they aren't worried about claims of an illegitimate vote, and the union is preparing to flex its regional muscle in hopes of solidifying a deal for its newest members.

“If the company thinks they’re just dealing with Victorville with this, then they have a huge surprise coming their way,” Phil Cooper, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 896, told the Daily Press. “This is too important to every other Keurig Dr Pepper facility in California to not get a good contract for these people.”

Keurig Dr Pepper didn't respond to multiple requests for comment.

3,000 members across state

Local 896 represents beer and soft drink workers at some, but not all, production and distribution facilities in California, including those of major brands such as Coca-Cola, Budweiser and Pepsi. Its union work goes back 75 years.
Cooper, who has lived in the High Desert for nearly four decades and led the Teamsters unit for nine, said his Teamsters branch has about 2,500 members in Southern California and 500 members in Northern California, "so we're a small local."

However, with the broader union's state and nationwide presence — the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents more than a million workers in North America — Local 896 often doesn't work alone.

Cooper says that cross-regional reach was put to use earlier this year, when he asked the International to assist the Keurig Dr Pepper campaign in Victorville. Despite a moratorium the union had in place on flying at the time, he says a group of Las Vegas-based Teamsters drove down to bolster the organizing effort.

Local 896 isn't the only branch of the union that seeks to organize the beverage industry. Cooper said a total of six Keurig Dr Pepper facilities in Southern California that had unionized with some branch of the Teamsters prior to the recent vote in Victorville.

Cooper said his local represents workers at two other Keurig Dr Pepper production facilities in the region: one in Vernon, the other in San Fernando. In both cities, drivers and merchandisers are unionized under a different branch, Local 848, which also represents salespeople in Vernon.

Separately, Local 952 covers a Keurig Dr Pepper facility in Orange, Cooper said. In Riverside, workers are unionized under Local 1932, which has organized public and private-sector employees across the Inland Empire. San Diego and Ventura are two other locations represented by different locals.

Similar campaigns are ongoing in the state's central and northern regions, he said, including an effort at a Keurig Dr Pepper distribution facility in Sacramento.

Cooper calls this amalgam of Teamsters branches a key to "union density," or the clout to leverage a wide array of workers toward winning demands at an individual workplace using tactics such as mass organizing campaigns or widespread strikes.

Still, pushes to unionize the beverage supply chain statewide have been a mixed bag for unions like Local 896. Keurig Dr Pepper facilities, including the one in Victorville, are no exception.

A union campaign fails if it doesn't get majority approval at the ballot box, and Cooper says the Teamsters only seek an official vote if they're confident they've got support from two-
thirds of represented workers.

For that reason, the tight margin in this month's Victorville vote surprised them. Cooper attributes it to 25 eligible workers having not voted and some others having been swayed by counter-union efforts of the company.

Some past campaigns by Local 896 and its affiliates have faltered, dissipating before a vote was held.

'Wait a minute'

This isn’t the first effort to unionize workers at the Victorville factory.

Cooper said an initial campaign fell short in 2013 — just a few years after the Victorville facility opened as a Dr Pepper/Seven Up Inc. site — when the Teamsters found themselves butting heads with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) over which group would represent the employees.

The IAM ultimately got a successful vote to represent 23 maintenance mechanics at the facility. Teamsters wanted everyone else, but Cooper says the organizing process had become too disoriented to galvanize enough support for a separate vote.

He added that the IAM never reached a collective bargaining agreement with the company, effectively nullifying the mechanics' union status. Mechanics are now among those set to be represented by Local 896 in Victorville.

For years after the 2013 campaign, Cooper says he kept in touch with workers and made a few attempts to rekindle the unionizing effort. Then, in late 2019, a warehouse worker reached out to him.

“It was right before COVID hit where a lot of us were being worked a lot of hours — 12 hour shifts, seven hours a week,” Adan Soto, a material handler at the Victorville facility, told the Daily Press. “A lot of us started trying to organize and say, ‘Look, what can we do to let the company know that, you know, this is serious. We’re not standing for this anymore.’”

Soto and Cooper met in October that year, sparking a string of follow-up meetings between Teamsters from the outside and rank-and-file workers within.

Then, the pandemic began.
The organizing effort became an internal one led by workers like Soto. He says support for the union push gained momentum among workers as policy shifts became more punitive and less transparent.

Soto said early in the pandemic, Keurig Dr Pepper would hold "town hall"-style meetings to inform the workers of any upcoming policy changes. The workers would then be given a consent form to sign, he said, acknowledging that they understood and agreed to the change.

As in-person work continued at the facility, Soto says the meetings and consent forms stopped while policy changes continued.

"Now when the changes were made, we're like, 'Wait a minute, where's the paper to show that you explained this to me?'"

Soto says multiple workers went on to face penalties for violating policies they didn't realize had changed. One employee was written up for wearing earbuds in a filler room, he said. One got a write-up after not realizing his personal time-off had been converted to sick time-off; he entered the workplace premises while on sick time-off, which Soto says is a violation of the sick time policy.

Cooper, Soto and other organizers say the company also paid “union-busters” to organize impromptu meetings and hang around the facility to dissuade workers from the idea of unionizing — referencing union-required fees and saying the union can’t guarantee them job improvements.

Frustrations over those and other actions by the company, Cooper and Soto say, convinced a majority of workers to vote for the union.

'It's gonna be a struggle'

Cooper said assuming any election challenges from Keurig Dr Pepper are unsuccessful, he’ll send a request for information to the company for everything he needs to know about the worker experience, such as wages, medical benefits and disciplinary standards.

When a start-date for negotiations is determined, Cooper says the rank-and-file workers from each department represented in the Victorville facility — lab techs, janitors, forklift drivers and more — will tell Teamsters who they want in negotiations.

"We'll have a very large negotiation committee, and these rank-and-file workers are the subject-matter experts," Cooper said. "I'm going to help them get their first contract, but
they're going to tell us what they want, and if the company tells us something and we turn around to ask if that's true, they can call bullshit."

Cooper said if Keurig Dr Pepper attempts "to give us a bad contract and never get it voted in," a broader Teamsters strike could result — putting the company "in danger of having the whole of Southern California shut down."

"It’s gonna be a struggle," he said. "I personally believe we’re gonna have to leverage this negotiation."

Soto has become a de facto leader of the effort at the factory. He says he’s somewhat nervous, as this is new territory for him, but that he’s excited to fight for better, more secure terms of the job. He hopes to prove to his coworkers that joining a union was the right move.

Yet, Soto doesn't see the union push as one of hostility, and says he plans to be a fair mediator with Keurig Dr Pepper.

"I want to do what's right, what's fair for the workers, and also be that model employee for my employer."

Charlie McGee covers the city of Barstow and its surrounding communities for the Daily Press. He is also a Report for America corps member with the GroundTruth Project, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization dedicated to supporting the next generation of journalists in the U.S. and around the world. McGee may be reached at 760-955-5341 or cmcgee@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter @bycharliemcgee.
Local News | News

Art Walk returns to downtown San Bernardino this week

Visitors to the Art Walk in the Breezeway in downtown San Bernardino look at pieces for sale Saturday, Nov. 9, 2019. Approximately 30 local artists, along with musical entertainment, participated in the event, which was organized by the Arts Connection and San Bernardino Generation Now. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By Brian Whitehead | bwhitehead@scng.com | The Sun
PUBLISHED: July 27, 2021 at 3:11 p.m. | UPDATED: July 27, 2021 at 3:13 p.m.

Downtown San Bernardino will be the place to enjoy art, music, food and community Thursday, July 29.

After a nearly two-year hiatus, mostly due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Downtown SB Art Walk is returning to the city thanks to several community groups and business owners.

Festivities are scheduled from 6 to 10 p.m.

“This is something that transcends all the different things going on downtown,” said Kristopher Gonzalez, president of the Civic Center Neighborhood Association. “Pomona has an Art Walk, Redlands has an Art Walk, L.A., I’m sure they have art walks. Why not us? Why don’t we have our own?”

“There’s a lot of talent in downtown,” Gonzalez said. “We need to showcase ourselves for ourselves.”

The return of Downtown SB Art Walk comes on the heels of the first SB Food Fest in more than a year.

Gonzalez, who owns Freedom Combat Sports and Fitness on North E Street, is one collaborator on a team of business owners who want to awake downtown San Bernardino from its years-long slumber.

Arts Connection, The Little Gallery of San Bernardino, David Friedman and Viva La Boba got the ball rolling more than two years ago with the inaugural Art Walk and Community Mixer.
Now, several other groups share their vision for the area.

Thursday’s art walk will extend beyond the Breezeway, with space to hang near the historic Enterprise Building and along a nearby alley where a living wall garden was planted last year.

“We want to show the world that we can collaborate in San Bernardino,” said Friedman, who co-owns Viva La Boba with girlfriend Tansu Philip. “We can hold these big events and familiarize people with the area and businesses worth visiting in downtown.

“It’s all a showcase of San Bernardino,” Friedman added, “and not just of San Bernardino, but of the people, the talented people of San Bernardino.”

**Spurred by a desire to engage the community, Friedman is looking to host big events in downtown San Bernardino.**

**“It’s all a showcase of San Bernardino,” Friedman added, “and not just of San Bernardino, but of the people, the talented people of San Bernardino.”**

**Brian Whitehead | Reporter**
Brian Whitehead is a reporter for The San Bernardino Sun, covering Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Rialto and San Bernardino. He previously covered prep sports and the cities of Buena Park, Fullerton and La Palma for The Orange County Register. A Grand Terrace native and Riverside Notre Dame alumnus, he earned his journalism degree from Cal State Fullerton in 2010. Since joining The San Bernardino Sun in late 2017, he has reported on development, education, homelessness, marijuana, political strife and the myriad issues facing San Bernardino post-bankruptcy.

**bwhitehead@scng.com**

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**How to Enjoy the Buttery Goodness of Queso Oaxaca: Read on**

By Cacique

Before you get cooking, we’d like to introduce you to the flavors found in our Queso Oaxaca.

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Tags: Arts, community, Top Stories Sun
Carman Earl, a 56-year-old woman with a mental disorder, walked away from her Victorville home just after midnight on Tuesday, according to authorities.

Victorville Sheriff’s Station officials are now asking the public’s help as they search for Earl, who they believe left home on Angelica Way at about 1:30 a.m. and has not been seen or heard from since.

Angelica Way is situated east of Amethyst Road, south of Luna Road and near Liberty Park and Victorville Fire Station 313.

Earl, who left home without her medication, is described as a Black female, approximately 5 feet, 6 inches tall, 200 pounds with black hair and brown eyes.

She was last seen wearing a black shirt, floral print pants, and pink Croc-style shoes.

Anyone with information about Earl’s whereabouts is asked to contact Deputy V. Quiroz or Deputy J. Greterman at the Victorville Sheriff’s Station at 760-241-2911 or Sheriff’s Dispatch at 760-956-5001.

Callers wishing to remain anonymous are urged to call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78CRIME (27463) or you may leave information on the We-Tip website at www.wetip.com.

This story is developing. It will be updated as more information becomes available.

Daily Press reporter Rene Ray De La Cruz may be reached at 760-951-6227 or RDeLaCruz@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter @DP_ReneDeLaCruz.
Card skimmers on rise in San Bernardino County, police say

Martin Estacio  Victorville Daily Press
Published 4:09 p.m. PT Jul. 27, 2021  |  Updated 4:33 p.m. PT Jul. 27, 2021

Authorities are warning that card skimming is on the rise throughout San Bernardino County.

Skimmers are devices attached to ATMs, gas pumps and card readers to steal the cardholder’s information.

As of last week, deputies have responded to 46 reports of the devices in the county since the beginning of the year, the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department said in an email.

In 2020, there were nine devices reported in total.

For the sheriff's Desert Patrol Bureau which encompasses the High Desert, there have been more than four times as many skimmers reported this year. Sheriff's officials said there have been 22 reports as of last week, compared to just five in 2020.

Credit card fraud was the second most common type of identity theft reported to the Federal Trade Commission last year with more than 393,000 reports.

The FBI said that card skimming likely costs financial institutions and consumers more than $1 billion a year.

Skimmers can range from complicated devices installed inside a card reader with hidden cameras capturing fingers typing in PINs, to relatively simple devices that fit over the reader and steal the data that way.

Devices can also be installed over the keypads to record keystrokes.

Here are several tips from the FBI and FTC to reduce the risk that your card information is stolen:
When using a fuel pump:

Check to see if the card reader has any damage or if anything looks unusual, a sign a skimming device has been installed.
Choose a pump that is closer to the store and in direct view of employees as it is less likely to be tampered with.
Use your debit card as a credit card, or cover the keypad when entering your PIN.
Pay inside rather than at the pump.
Some gas stations will place security seals over the reader’s panel. If the panel has been opened, the label will read “void.”

When using an ATM or other card reader:

Pull at the edges of the keypad before entering your PIN and cover the keypad when entering it.
Choose ATMS in well-lit, indoor locations and be aware of devices in popular tourist areas.
Use cards with chips as they are less likely to have data stolen.
Contact your bank if the ATM doesn’t record your card after you end or cancel a transaction.

*Daily Press reporter Martin Estacio may be reached at 760-955-5358 or MEstacio@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter @DP_mestacio.*