



## COVID-19

### ESF 15 - EXTERNAL AFFAIRS SOCIAL LISTENING REPORT THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021

#### SUMMARY

- Debate over double masking continues to dominate online discussion. Many members of the public are frustrated with what they feel is inconsistent messaging.
- Several areas of the country are beginning to report more positive trends of declining case counts. People are expressing relief and are hopeful this will alleviate some of the stress being placed on many hospitals. A small number speculate this is an expected decline following increased holiday infection rates.
- There have been positive reactions to news that FEMA has requested thousands of service members from DoD to provide vaccine support. People are hopeful this will help the process go more smoothly.
- There is growing concern among the medical community and the general public regarding new variants being reported in several states. There is particular worry over how vulnerability children may be to these new strains.
- Traditional media and morning front-page headlines focused on:
  - The federal government's interagency response to stand up additional vaccination sites
  - Increasing weekly dose shipments, ongoing detection of foreign variants of the COVID-19 virus
  - Renewed emphasis on facemasks reducing infection spread
- Public accessibility to vaccination centers or registration sites and consequential mitigation by state and local officials also continue to generate traditional media reports of frustration and a perception of unequal distribution.

#### PUBLIC PERCEPTION/SENTIMENT

- Discussion last night and this morning heavily focused on recent recommendations to wear two masks.
  - People are frustrated with what they feel is constantly changing guidance and policies. Many feel if one mask is ineffective doubling up will not make a difference. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))



## FEMA

- Several areas around the country are reporting a [decline in positive case counts](#). Most people are responding to this with cautious optimism and hoping it will relieve some of the stress on our healthcare system.
  - Some are warning people to remain vigilant especially in light of new variants being reported across the nation – stating historically we have [not prepared well for additional waves](#).
- There are conflicting arguments regarding children and COVID-19. Some note that children have been less susceptible to infection meaning [schools should reopen](#). The other side of the argument claims COVID-19 rates in schools are underreported and schools are not taking proper safety precautions for in-person learning.
  - A [rise in COVID-19 cases among children](#) over the last two week period, where two died in Fort Worth, Texas has led to an increase in concern from parents, who are now actively [opposing schools reopening](#) this spring semester.
- Police are warning individuals to [avoid sharing photos of their vaccination cards](#) noting it could reveal PII. Many people feel the PII included on the card is readily available information and do not feel it should be an issue to share.
- Reports that the White House is considering a requirement of a [negative COVID-19 test for domestic travel](#) are triggering debate. Most online discussion disagrees with the potential policy feeling existing protocols of masks and social distancing should be enough. Some feel it is an infringement upon personal freedoms.

## FEMA

- There has been a high volume of discussion about reports that FEMA has requested 10,000 service members from Department of Defense to help in administering doses of the vaccine. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
  - Public response has been largely positive with people showing gratitude and expressing hope that this will help streamline the process.
- There continues to be a fair amount of discussion about the allocation of funds to [support state vaccine distribution](#) and administration.
- Although reaction to FEMA's involvement in the vaccine mission has been largely positive there is still a moderate number of people who express a lack of trust toward FEMA and its role.

## RUMORS/MISINFORMATION

- YouTube has [removed more than 500,000 COVID-19 misinformation videos](#) since February 2020.
  - According to a survey by Acxiom of 5,000 U.S. consumers, over 44% of respondents partially believed an unfounded claim the COVID-19 death rate was deliberately exaggerated. Half of the 44% said it is "definitely true."

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### Federal Response

- There is a low volume of discussion about recent reports that the Department of Health and Human Services – ASPR [misappropriated money](#) intended to assist with the response to public health emergencies.

### Vulnerable Populations

- In the last two weeks, there was a [16% increase in the number of children infected by COVID-19](#). Experts are concerned about a new variants that seems to be spreading faster in kids.

### Public Health

- According to a CDC study, [only ten in four million cases](#) of Moderna doses administered resulted in anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction.

## REGION ONE

### Supply Chain

- In Vermont, approximately [860 doses of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine will be discarded](#) after being stored one degree lower than required at Springfield Hospital. Four hundred of those doses were intended for second-dose clinics.
  - Department of Health is conducting a site visit to get more details and notes that the state has had minimal wasted doses.

### Vaccination Administration

- In Maine, Cross Insurance Center will serve as a large scale [COVID-19 vaccination site](#) supporting the Bangor region, beginning February 2. The site will start with 900 vaccinations per day and increasing from there, pending supplies.
  - Another large vaccination site will be the former Scarborough Downs racing track, which will open February 3, to eventually be able to vaccinate 1000 people a day.
- In Vermont, [the first residents 75 and older](#) received their first doses of vaccine earlier this week. About 58% of this age group are already signed up for vaccinations.
- In Massachusetts, mass vaccination sites at [Fenway Park and Gillette Stadium](#) have 20,000 vaccine appointments and slots are open to book online for Phase 1 eligible, which includes healthcare workers, long-term care facilities, first responders, congregate care settings and people 75 and older.

### Public Health

- The Rhode Island Department of Health reported [the lowest daily rate of positive COVID-19 tests](#) in months on yesterday.



# FEMA

- Cape Cod Healthcare reports [no health care employees were out](#) because of a COVID-19 diagnosis for the first time in a long time.
  - Vaccination of thousands of Cape Cod Healthcare employees since December 15 has made a difference.
  - About 15% of Cape Cod Healthcare's 5,000 employees have so far declined the shot or are taking a wait-and-see approach.
- In Illinois, 30% of the Yorkville Community United School District 115's 950 staff members have said they [will not take the COVID-19 vaccine](#) when it is available.
- Ohio State University scientists received more than \$300,000 to fund their study from the National Institutes of Health plan to use hard candy to [screen for the loss of taste and smell](#) in people to detect COVID-19 in otherwise asymptomatic people.

## REGION TWO

### Supply Chain

- New Jersey is getting [130,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses](#) every week for the next three weeks, as the White House ramps up distribution.

### Vaccination Administration

- In New Jersey, residents' [second dose appointments will vary](#) according to how they got their first doses. A vaccination call center will be available to help starting January 31<sup>st</sup> from 0800 to 2000 ET.
- In Washington Heights, New York City, 100% of the new COVID-19 vaccination appointments at the Fort Washington Armory Center vaccine site will be [reserved for New York City residents](#), after local media denounced that wealthy people who lived outside the city were registering and leaving seniors in the borough without appointments.

### Vulnerable Populations

- Local media reported yesterday, that as of 0633 ET, [no one spoke Spanish in the Fort Washington Armory Center](#) vaccination site located in Washington Heights, NYC, which is 69% Hispanic.
- In New Jersey, there were reports of [older individuals lining up and camping out](#) overnight in sub-freezing temperatures to get vaccines at a first-come-first-serve vaccination site.
- New York State has [vaccinated 183 thousand people at nursing homes](#) and assisted living sites as of 0830 ET today.

### Public Health

- In New Jersey, the state health commissioner confirmed an individual with underlying conditions [died from UK COVID-19 variant](#) on January 28<sup>th</sup>.
  - At least eight people in New Jersey have tested positive to the contagious strain that some are referring to as 'Super-COVID.'

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- The new UK [COVID-19 variant was detected in Puerto Rico](#) on January 27<sup>th</sup>.

## REGION THREE

### Supply Chain

- In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania the Allegheny County Health Department says there is an overwhelming demand for the COVID-19 vaccine but there are [not enough supplies to go around](#). The health department is also frustrated with the lack of a vaccine registration system at the state level.

### Vaccination Administration

- In Fredericksburg, Virginia, [Mary Washington Hospital received 6,000 more vaccine doses](#). This is part of the state's effort to move more shots from the freezer into the arms of residents. The doses will be distributed through Sunday, and the hospital is contacting older residents, health care workers and school staff members to make appointments.
- At Dorney Park in Allentown, Pennsylvania, the COVID-19 vaccine was given to 1,000 residents on January 27 at one of the [first mass vaccination sites in Pennsylvania](#).
- Fairfax County Public Schools in Fairfax, Virginia announced on January 27<sup>th</sup> that cancelled [employee appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine are now back on and being rescheduled](#).
- In Prince William County, Maryland according to the school board chairman they are planning to administer more [2,400 first dosages of COVID-19 vaccine to teachers and staff members](#), in mass-vaccination events over the weekend.
- In Baltimore, Maryland local media reports a [portion of hospital workers are choosing not to get their shots](#). The president of the Maryland Hospital Association states this is due to staff wanting to wait and see about possible adverse reactions.

### Vulnerable Populations

- The Virginia Department of Health has released their [COVID-19 vaccine demographics](#) for their vaccine rollout. The demographics are broken down by residents who received one dose, residents fully vaccinated, age, race and ethnicity, and sex. Vulnerable populations to include Black Americans and Latinx Americans have been vaccinated at a lower rate compared to White Americans.
- In Richmond, Virginia the Daily Planet Health Services, a safety net healthcare provider, began an onsite push this week to [vaccinate the homeless population](#).
- In Woodbridge, Virginia a family medicine [physician addressed several myths about the COVID-19 vaccine](#) during a virtual conversation with Prince William County's NAACP chapter. It was noted that the vaccines were created safely and are not being "tested" on Black Americans or other minorities.
- In Montgomery County, Maryland a group of teachers who refer to themselves as "vaccine hunters" are [volunteering their time to help elders and non-English speaking residents get vaccine appointments](#).

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# FEMA

- In Prince George, Maryland a local news reporter [interviewed Black Prince George residents on their hesitancy to get the COVID-19 vaccine](#) at a new clinic in the District Heights Giant. Some residents felt not enough research has been conducted yet and they do not feel comfortable getting the vaccine.

## Public Health

- In Montgomery County, Maryland, the county's Chief Health Officer told local media that if vaccinations continue at this pace it could take [two years for the entire county](#) to receive shots.
- The governor of Virginia stated January 27<sup>th</sup> that the current COVID-19 restrictions and mitigation efforts that were supposed to expire at the end of the month will [extend through the end of February](#). He also stated the state can expect an increase in vaccine supply.
- On January 27<sup>th</sup> [Virginia adopted permanent COVID-19 workplace safety standards](#). These standards include appropriate personal protective equipment, sanitation, social distancing, infections disease preparedness and response plans, record keeping, training and hazard communications in workplaces.

## REGION FOUR

### Vaccination Administration

- Mississippi [issued guidance on COVID-19 vaccine payments](#) to insurance companies, which basically ensures that members have health insurance coverage for vaccines.
  - This includes foregoing cost-sharing for vaccines, reimbursing providers for the cost of administering the vaccine and ensuring that if the vaccine is administered during a regular office visit, providers are billed and reimbursed separately from the visit costs.
- Georgia state health officials have [suspended the Medical Center of Elberton](#), a rural hospital, from receiving new doses of COVID-19 vaccine after the hospital vaccinated teachers from the Elbert County School District against state guidelines. Vaccines are currently only open to those who are 65 and older.
- North Carolina launched its online [Find My Vaccine Group tool](#) this week to help residents find when they will be eligible for the vaccine, including which group they fall into for the vaccine rollout phases.
- In Durham, North Carolina, the county Sheriff is clarifying that the vaccine is mandatory for his employees [following low compliance rates](#).
- South Carolina ranks among the top in the U.S. for vaccine administration according to a newly released report by Becker's Hospital Review. Officials say they are [making progress despite supply challenges](#).
  - The Department of Health and Environmental Control officials share that this report more accurately depicts the vaccination rate in comparison to the CDC's

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Data Tracker, which DHEC says does not calculate the doses administered relative to the doses distributed.

## Vulnerable Populations

- In Florida, the governor announced [Publix would be the exclusive COVID-19 vaccine distributor for Palm Beach](#). Some city officials say the move is discriminatory to Black and rural populations who do not have a Publix nearby.
  - This action means that Publix will receive future vaccine doses over county physicians, pharmacies and hospitals. For residents who are not near a Publix, possible access issues will exist.
  - The governor's executive order allows for individuals under 65 [with underlying health conditions](#) to get the vaccine now but it must be obtained through a hospital program. However, with more vaccines going to mega-sites and grocery store pharmacies, their access to the vaccine is limited.

## Public Health

- Alabama announced [three residents have tested positive](#) for the UL COVID-19 variant.
  - Two of the cases are from Montgomery and another from Jefferson County.
- In Florida, [19 counties have cases of a variant](#) of COVID with the highest number of known cases reported in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.
- The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control confirmed two residents have tested [positive for the more contagious coronavirus strain](#) first seen in South Africa.

## REGION FIVE

### Supply Chain

- In Michigan, Bronson Methodist Hospital posted that [all COVID-19 vaccine appointments had been filled](#), for adults 65 and older, for the 1,700 doses received for the week as of 0930 ET, January 27.
  - At 1700 ET, January 27, the hospital closed their phone lines to new callers.
  - Bronson's online scheduling systems [temporarily became overwhelmed](#) on January 26, even with adjusted staffing and bandwidth for its website to anticipate the rush.

### Vaccination Administration

- In Illinois, Christian-Montgomery Emergency Management Agency reports vaccine delivery is not only [limited, but is also inconsistent](#).
  - Only 7% of the population wanting the vaccine has been dosed. About 10% of those who came in did so without a vaccine record authorization form, which slows lines down.

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# FEMA

- Since the beginning of distribution, only one dose has been wasted and that was because of a poorly manufactured needle.
- In Minnesota, Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul was converted into [a pilot mass vaccination site](#) to give 15,000 vaccinations over five days, aimed at educators and childcare workers.
- In Michigan and Indiana, [Walmart and Kroger pharmacies](#) are among the newest establishments to begin administering COVID-19 vaccines, beginning with appointment registration next week.

## Vaccine Development

- In Indiana, a South Bend clinic is looking for [Johnson & Johnson vaccine trial volunteers](#).
  - Locally, 300 people are needed, representing a range of adult ages, genders, races, ethnicities and medical conditions.
  - The clinic is one of 100 research sites selected around the world, of which 50 are in the United States.

## Staffing

- Michigan is sending bonus checks to cover [COVID hazard pay](#) to teachers and school staff.

## Public Health

- In Wisconsin, 62% of residents [cancelled their dental appointments](#) due to COVID-19.
  - Dentists are expecting a backlog of dental problems because of a year of missed appointments.
- In Indiana, an [outbreak of COVID-19 has killed several members](#) and long-term residents at the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute.
- In Ohio, Cleveland Clinic has found that a portion of its [N95 mask supply](#) used between November and January 25 were counterfeit.

## Community Mitigation

- In Detroit, Michigan [cancels St. Patrick's Day Parade](#) for a second year in a row.
- Michigan House of Representatives members have introduced legislation that would [withhold COVID-19 recovery funding](#) from K-12 school unless local health departments are granted the authority to determine if in-person education and sports should occur.

## REGION SIX

## Vaccination Administration

- In El Paso, Texas, 5 buildings bought by the city with CARES Act funds and refurbished to serve as [COVID-19 clinics are currently not being used](#) because city officials said they were instructed by the state to give their COVID-19 vaccine allotments to one mega station. All but one of them are fully functional.

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# FEMA

- According to the local news report, city officials and state officials are giving conflicting information as to how and where should vaccines be distributed.
- In Lubbock, Texas, the Brownfield Regional Medical Center hosted its third drive-thru vaccination clinic, and due to a [lack of eligible people for vaccination](#), the staff vaccinated others as well to prevent the vaccine lot from going to waste.
- Texas Department of State Health Services said that [teachers are not yet classified as a priority](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine as of 2300 ET, January 27<sup>th</sup>.
- In Corpus Christi, a [second COVID-19 vaccine hub will open](#) in the American Bank Center, and it will be able to vaccinate up to 5,000 people daily (depending on the amount of doses received).
- Dallas opened a [new COVID-19 mass vaccination center](#) today which is working by appointment only for groups 1A and 1B. They plan to vaccinate 5,000 people in the drive-thru vaccination site this week.
- [Rio Grande Valley, Texas residents](#) are concerned that the vaccine allocation for the county will not reach the intended 9% of the population due to recent reports of people crossing the border to get vaccinated.

## Tribal

- The Cherokee Nation is building temporary structures on land in Sequoyah County for [COVID-19 patients who need to isolate](#). When the pandemic is over the land will be converted to a hunting and fishing reserve for tribal citizens.

## Public Health

- In Oklahoma, the attorney general's office is attempting to [return \\$2 million worth of hydroxychloroquine](#) purchased last year.
- [2 children in Fort Worth](#), Texas died of COVID-19 in recent days according to local media, experts are concerned about a new strain of the virus possibly spreading faster in kids.

## Community Mitigation

- 2 Medical professionals in Oklahoma are [debunking myths about the COVID-19 vaccines](#) in response to misinformation circulating in the state.

## REGION SEVEN

### Supply Chain

- In Iowa, state officials are [investigating a COVID-19 testing site](#) allegedly set up for a private company connected to the governor's list of donors.

### Vaccination Administration

- In Missouri, local news reported that [state lawmakers received the initial doses](#) of COVID-19 vaccine at an event intended for employees from the Missouri Department of Public Safety and Department of Transportation.

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# FEMA

- Some state workers expressed their frustration with the news saying they feel others should be prioritized.
- In Kansas, Riley County Emergency Operations Center [moved its COVID-19 vaccination clinic](#) to CiCo Park due to concerns of parking and congestion.
- In Missouri, most of the [City of Rolla Fire & Rescue](#) will receive its second COVID-19 vaccine this week by Phelps Health.

## Public Health

- Kansas officials are [conducting tests to see if any new variants](#) of COVID are causing an outbreak at Winfield Correctional Facility where inmates regularly work in surrounding communities.
  - Over the past few weeks, the state has seen a drop in reported cases and deaths. Two weeks leading up to the outbreak, there had not been any reported cases at the prison.

## REGION EIGHT

### Vaccination Administration

- In Denver, Colorado the local grocery store, King Soopers acknowledged their [mistake in turning vaccine-eligible Colorado residents away based on their residency](#). Residents expressed their frustrations to local media.

### Vulnerable Populations

- Denver, Colorado is working to [improve vaccination rates among the Latinx community](#). Nonprofit Servicios de la Raza, with assistance from state and local partners, will host a free drive-up vaccine drive Friday through Sunday. Their goal is to vaccinate 600 residents 70 and older, specifically the LatinX community.
  - Also in Denver, Colorado the University of Colorado Hospital successfully vaccinated 1,000 Colorado residents in a drive-through clinic at Coors Field last weekend, [the hospital will administer 10,000 doses of the vaccine](#) total this Saturday and Sunday.
- In Utah, the county of Salt Lake City is utilizing COVID-19 [mobile health centers to deliver vaccine doses to the most vulnerable and underserved people](#) in the community. The director described how the mobile health centers will target communities where a language barrier makes it hard to communicate, or where lack of access to technology makes it difficult to connect.

### Public Health

- In Colorado Springs, Colorado residents are reportedly being [turned away from vaccines based on where they live](#), something that goes against state guidance.

### Community Mitigation

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# FEMA

- In Denver, Colorado starting January 27, there [are new policies at Union Station bus concourse designed to protect RTD riders and employees](#). The policy includes prohibiting people from lying or sitting on the floor, prohibiting eating in the bus concourse, and limiting the number of people in the restrooms to two at a time.

## REGION NINE

### Vaccination Administration

- [Blue Shield of California and Kaiser Permanente](#) help ramp up the state's COVID-19 vaccine delivery system, speedily and equitably across the state of nearly 40 million residents, after a frustratingly slow start.

### Vulnerable Populations

- In California, seniors are [experiencing difficulty navigating](#) the state's COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
  - Some are having trouble [using the appointment system online](#) or over the phone and have visited vaccination sites in hopes of getting on an in-person waiting list. Even if they do get an appointment, some providers use [QR codes for admittance](#), further challenging people who are not tech-savvy.
  - Once at vaccination sites, there are reports of them having to [endure long lines](#) in cold weather and no bathroom facilities.
  - Five of the county-run mass vaccination sites are drive-through only, which presents transportation issues getting to appointments for seniors who do not have cars.
- In California, Los Angeles County reported significantly [lower rate of vaccinations](#) for healthcare workers who live in the southern part of the city, home to large populations of Black and Latino residents, compared with other regions.
- In California, while farm workers were deemed essential workers for the COVID-19 vaccine, the marijuana industry is [not being given answers on their vaccine eligibility](#). However, other states, like Maryland, have [added marijuana workers](#) to their lists.
- In California, a walk-up COVID-19 vaccination site opened in East San at the Mexican Heritage Plaza. The clinic [is targeting the Latino population](#) and communities of color.

### Public Health

- In California, the Los Angeles region is now in its fourth week of declining hospitalizations, [down to 50% of the high number of cases reported last week](#).
- In California, the San Diego Zoo reports [eight gorillas infected with COVID-19](#), possibly from their keeper who was diagnosed in early January.

## REGION TEN

### Supply Chain

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# FEMA

- In Prosser, Washington [two COVID-19 vaccine clinics closed this week](#) due to vaccine reallocation, resulting in thousands of canceled appointments. The closure was announced after the clinic received 100 vaccine doses this week compared to the 1,600 they received last week.

## Vaccination Administration

- In Oregon, the governor said the state will send [17,000 additional COVID-19 vaccine doses to the Portland area](#) next week. This comes one day after tri-county health officers said tens of thousands of health care workers may wait weeks or months to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
  - Also, in Portland, Oregon local hospital groups confirmed to local media that they were ordered by the Oregon Health Authority to [administer most of the vaccine doses arriving this week to educators, not healthcare workers](#).
  - Today, in Portland, Oregon [the governor ordered 32,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines redirected to the Portland area](#) instead of going to other parts of the state. This came after news reports that health care workers in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas county were unable to be vaccinated because of a shortage of doses.
- This week in Marysville, Washington, the [Tulalip Tribe donated hundreds of its own vaccines to Marysville educators](#). Tribal members told local media they had more doses left after a majority of their tribal members had been vaccinated.

## Vulnerable Populations

- In Portland, Oregon Portland State University [Latinx students provide contact tracing and COVID-19 vaccine outreach](#). A professor that designed the program states that poverty, lack of education, lack of access to healthcare, stigma, discrimination is preventing the Latinx community from receiving the vaccine.

## Healthcare System Stress

- In Spokane, Washington health leaders [are cracking down on non-residents](#) who are trying to cross state lines to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This is due to the Spokane Arena opening as a mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Health officials said anyone seeking a COVID-19 vaccine at one of four mass vaccination clinics must live or work in Washington.

## Public Health

- The [governor of Washington visited the Clark County mass vaccination site](#) today. The state has gone from vaccinating about 13,000 per day to nearly 40,000 per day. According to the governor the site is administering more than 700 vaccinations per day and is one of four mass vaccination sites in the state.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA

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## Federal Response

- Wednesday evening, national and trade publications reported on a FEMA draft document planning to request at least 10,000 Department of Defense service members to assist with vaccination efforts nationwide. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
  - This morning, a Pentagon spokesperson confirmed the Department will [review and determine what assets](#) can safely support the effort.
- This morning, one U.S. senator from Hawaii lauded FEMA's recently approved [\\$1.88 million in aid to cover costs of meals for individuals](#) exposed to COVID-19 and high-risk individuals with underlying health conditions.
- One national radio outlet provided a [state-by-state comparison of vaccine administration](#), before highlighting the White House's goal to acquire an additional 200 million doses and provide states more reliable projections of vaccine supply. The same article notes West Virginia and North Dakota have most efficiently administered their vaccine doses.
- While CDC does not reportedly expect the U.K. variant of COVID-19 virus to jeopardize vaccine reliability, there remains relatively [less certainty regarding the South African variant](#), which has now been detected in 28 states.
  - Later this morning, two health professors from Columbia University and University of Washington claimed that the country is in a '[race against time](#)' to ensure vaccine protection against new variants and stabilize manufacturing and distribution channels.
  - Although not focused on the U.S., one national outlet has reported that [South African mutations have spiked case and fatality counts](#) faster than previous waves of the virus.

## Supply Chain

- In South Carolina, the state's house of representatives is reportedly ordering the Department of Health to [reallocate vaccine supply according to the state's four regions on a per capita basis](#), accounting for rural, underserved, and impoverished populations. Some lawmakers opposed the decision, arguing the per capita model would not accurately address rural community needs.
- Cleveland Clinic has reportedly discovered that [N95 masks supplied by a third-party vendor](#) are possibly counterfeit. The Clinic has admitted that the masks, used between Nov. 20 and Jan. 25, were removed and replaced.
- Iowa's Department of Health has reportedly shared concern that current [vaccine supply will not outlast Phase 1B](#). In light of shortages, the governor has prioritized individuals at high-risk and above age 65 for vaccination.

## Vulnerable Populations

- In Massachusetts, [elderly individuals are reportedly struggling](#) to register for appointments on the state-run website, for which the governor has urged patience



# FEMA

during vaccine shortages. The governor was quoted in Wednesday's press conference stating Phase 2 will allow more residents to register for appointments.

- In St. James Parish, Louisiana, one hospital has established a [call center and transportation service](#) to facilitate vaccination appointments and inoculation for those with limited transportation access. The same article displays a statewide map, which indicates central and southwest Louisiana have received least amount of vaccines per capita.

## Healthcare System Stress

- In a development from yesterday, Overlake Medical Center in Bellevue, Washington [apologized for granting roughly 100 donors special access](#) to receiving a vaccine. The hospital's CEO also admitted the current scheduling system, which recently crashed, was not the best way to coordinate appointments.
- In Arizona, one editorial articulates that the [state's vaccine registration portal](#) will fix a bug that prevented secondary vaccine appointment registrations. The author also mentions the state governor's pressuring local vaccine providers who have not yet administered 40% of supply to explain how they will reach 80% in next seven days.

## Public Health

- [County health departments in California](#) report frustration over the state's rollout plan. As an example, Mercer County has received approximately 7,500 doses for roughly 287,000 residents, while Pasadena received over 22,000 vaccine doses for 140,000 residents. Mercer County's public health director commented that it will take 5 years to achieve 80% herd immunity in our community at the current vaccination rate.
- [Stress levels](#) among the public continue to rise, according to healthcare professionals. In Tennessee, the McNabb Center's director of nursing reportedly said the center's call volume for in-person visits, telehealth consults, and to the COVID-19 hotline have increased significantly in recent months, indicating mass public uncertainty regarding how soon individuals can be vaccinated.
- In light of new variant detections, one Harvard University professor [reiterated White House calls for the general public to wear N95 masks](#) in order to slow infection spread. A separate infectious disease physician has called for the federal government to release a safety standard for available masks and call for ventilation in public spaces.
- In Pennsylvania, Philadelphia's SEPTA transit system is reportedly launching the [Mask Force Philly initiative public awareness campaign](#), where ambassadors will distribute face masks and hand sanitizer to riders. SEPTA reportedly admitted 90% of riders have complied with health guidelines.
- In Wisconsin, the state assembly is expected to [repeal the governor's mask mandate](#), which would also 'jeopardize \$49 million in federal good assistance for low-income families—a contingency on the mask mandate.

## Private Sector

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FEMA

- In a national article explaining the difficulty in quickly ramping up vaccine production, Moderna and Pfizer have confirmed they have [reliable raw material suppliers](#) and are working with the federal government to anticipate any 'bottleneck concerns.'





FEMA

Defense Department, APF Getty

**CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

**TOTAL CASES**  
101,098,771

**DEATHS**  
2,180,867

**IN THE UNITED STATES**  
**CASES SO FAR TODAY**  
27,522

**DEATHS SO FAR TODAY**  
860

SOURCE: JONAS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

**BREAKING NEWS**

**FEMA REQUESTS MILITARY HELP WITH VACCINATIONS ACROSS U.S.**

**LIVE**

**CNN**

1:24 PM ET

**HIDE WASHINGTON BECAUSE OF MOUNTING THREATS** ▶ **CMTE. ON HOUSE NEWSROOM**

# ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 ALASKA'S NEWSPAPER | WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE - 1976, 1989, 2020 \$2.00

**CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE**

- Capacity restrictions to ease under new city emergency order, A2
- State reports 180 new infections and 1 death Wednesday, A4
- White House predicts death toll will spike in next 4 weeks, A7

**Traffic passes in Eagle River's business district Wednesday. A new survey released by the AEC reports that 86% of Municipality of Anchorage businesses surveyed said the spread of COVID-19 was a barrier to growth, and 49% of businesses said municipal regulations are hampering growth.**

MIKE GUSTAFSON

**ECONOMY**

## Controlling COVID-19 seen as top business concern for Anchorage

# TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

HAVASUNNEWS.COM • LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA | \$1.00 | Thursday, January 28, 2021

**GOOD MORNING!**

**TODAY'S FORECAST:** Sun and areas of high clouds.

69 53 SEE PAGE 12

**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

Local and national numbers are updated as of 7 p.m. Wednesday

**LOCAL**

Cases in Lake Havasu City: 1,508

Cases in Mohave County: 27

New Cases in County: 16,864

New Cases in County: 16

Deaths in Mohave County: 155

Deaths in Mohave County: 412

Recovered cases in county: 10,407

Source: Mohave County Department of Public Health

**ARIZONA**

Positive cases: 718,561

Deaths: 12,440

Percent positive: 14.7%

Source: Arizona Department of Public Health

**NATIONAL**

Positive cases: 25,301,166

Deaths: 42,179

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**TO READ INSIDE**

## With FEMA's help, county launches vaccine hotline

**TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD**

Mohave County has enlisted the federal government to help local residents get their coronavirus vaccines.

The county announced Wednesday it would launch a covid-19 hotline, staffed by employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to assist seniors in making vaccine appointments.

The phone number is 928-753-8665.

The county is currently only offering vaccines to people who are older than 75 years old or those who work in health care fields.

Many of the seniors who qualify for the shots, however, don't have the technical prowess to schedule an appointment for themselves online.

Mohave County spokesman Roger Galloway said county staff received many calls from frustrated residents seeking help.

"We had many calls from elderly people, saying we don't know how to use a computer," he said. "This is a really wonderful way to address that problem with people who are skilled in this kind of assistance."

According to Galloway, the county was approached by Arizona Department of Health Services about the assistance.

See **HOTLINE**, Page 5

## ASU Havasu will host new nursing program

**By MALEY WALTERS**

**SPECIAL TO TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD**

Arizona State University will expand its nursing program to its Lake Havasu City campus next fall as the region faces an immediate need for trained nurses.

The nursing program will be a satellite extension of ASU's Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation, which is based in Phoenix. The program will have space for 32 students in Havasu and will offer a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at Lake Havasu's tuition rate, according to a news release from the university.

The demand for nursing education and ASU's goal to increase enrollment at its Havasu campus prompted the expansion, according to Carla Hancherod, ASU at Lake Havasu director, said. She said she hopes the new nursing program inspire nurses to stay in the area to work.

"This will ensure that it can be handled



The covid-19 vaccine is administered Saturday at the Emory Health covid-19 vaccination testing site at Mohave Community College.

# Statesman Journal

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | STATESMANJOURNAL.COM PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Who goes first?

COVID-19 vaccine rollout forces stark moral choices



## Some still waiting for extended benefits

State says it is working on fixing backlog of unemployment checks

**Bill Poesler**  
Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Peter Fenton went from a tough but rewarding job to spending his days struggling through a frustrating tangle of bureaucracy.

For the past seven years, he worked for companies that helped people transition from institutionalized settings to living independently.

Since leaving his job in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he's had to focus on trying to access the unemployment benefits the law says he should be getting.

A month ago, he faced his unemployment benefits running out before a new stimulus package was passed into law that gave him an additional 12 weeks of coverage.

After receiving unemployment for the first week of January, the payments stopped, and he's received no

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SUNNY 52+30 FORECAST, A2 | THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | oanow.com

## EAMC set to open larger COVID-19 vaccination site

**SARA PALCERMAN**  
Statesman Journal

East Alabama Medical Center plans to open a new community COVID-19 vaccine site in the coming days in conjunction with area cities and agencies in order to ramp up vaccination.

The new vaccination site will open next week in the former Tuesday Morning building located in the Market Square Shopping Center. The clinic will replace

EAMC's current vaccination site in the EAMC Education Center, the hospital system announced in a Wednesday news release.

"Over the past six weeks, we have ramped up to 500 vaccinations a day in our current location," said John Atkinson, EAMC spokesman. "We believe we can double that volume to 1,000 shots a day in this new location."

The new clinic is a collaborative effort between EAMC and the cities of Auburn and Opelika. The Lee County Emergency Management Agency (LEMA) is also assisting.

"Laura Grill (EAMC president) began the communication with these groups less than two weeks ago and thanks to their total buy-in, we are now just days away from it opening," Atkinson said. "Their support is what made this happen."

Atkinson added that those involved had a meeting at the vaccination site on Tuesday and will have a rehearsal on Saturday.

"Our plan is to open in this new location next Monday, Feb. 17," he said. "We will have plans in place to notify those who are scheduled for an appointment if that changes."

Vaccinations are by appointment only and walk-ins are not permitted. Vaccinations are still limited to residents of Lee, Chambers and Macon counties, age 75 and up as well as previously designated groups, including healthcare workers and first responders.

EAMC plans to share information as new age groups are announced online at [www.eamc.org/patient-and-guests/covid-19-information](http://www.eamc.org/patient-and-guests/covid-19-information).

EAMC says there are no "left-over" doses at the end of the day that are not permitted. Vaccinations are still limited to residents of Lee, Chambers and Macon counties, age 75 and up as well as previously designated groups, including healthcare workers and first responders.

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# St. Lucie News Tribune

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | TPCALM.COM PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## US task force: Do more, Florida

**Panel's report recommends closing bars, restaurants, gyms**

**Nikki Rouse**  
St. Lucie News Tribune  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Florida bars, indoor dining, gyms and any other indoor spaces where masks are not worn 100% of the time should be closed down to stop the spread of COVID-19, according to a White House Coronavirus Task Force report.

The recommendation comes as the state is seeing a slight decrease in new coronavirus cases, test positivity and hospitalizations.

The report, which was officially released on Jan. 27, was first revealed made

into another shutdown of any kind, according to state Rep. Tom Leek, R-Osmond Beach, chair of the committee on Pandemics and Public Emergencies.

"You have to look at the economic impact," Leek said. "The most at risk should stay at home instead of forcing us into further economic ruin."

Social distancing, wearing a mask, and taking care of oneself are still critically important, Leek said. But he said he would not force a shutdown on every person in the state, especially based on

"Fact of the matter is we have to take in all the information we get and make the best decision for the state as a whole."

**State Rep. Tom Leek** | R-Osmond Beach

available following a News-Journal public records request to the Florida Department of Health.

The state did not respond to questions about how, if at all, the recommendations will be put into effect.

But it's unlikely that the state will open

**Pam Woodsome pays for her order Sept. 17 at East Greek Dystonia. A White House report recommends Florida take more actions to help stop COVID-19.**

renew information at beach news-journal

See **REPORT**, Page 12A

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FEMA

# Courier Journal

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | COURIERJOURNAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisville, Kentucky



Local merchant Megan Bell operates her Next Door Market from a kiosk in Mall St. Matthews and plans to open another location in the Russell neighborhood within a retail and business complex. MARY PEARL/SPECIAL TO COURIER JOURNAL

## Beshear: New strain has likely spread

UK coronavirus variant found in Kenton County

Deborah Yetter  
Louisville Courier Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The new, more contagious strain of COVID-19 first identified in the United Kingdom and found recently in Kentucky was detected in two people from Kenton County but has likely spread further, Gov. Andy Beshear said Wednesday.

"The way this thing spreads, I think we should assume it's moved beyond those two individuals," Beshear said at a news briefing.

The new strain of a COVID-19, called a variant, is considered around 50% more contagious.

British officials have speculated the

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# Aiken Standard

AIKEN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA'S TRUSTED LOCAL SOURCE FOR NEWS AND INFORMATION SINCE 1847

THURSDAY, January 28, 2021

AIKENSTANDARD.COM

Vol. 155, No. 28 | AIKEN, S.C.

## Pacers get home sweep

USCA basketball teams get big wins Wednesday



The USC Aiken men's and women's basketball teams took to the court Wednesday at the Convocation Center. Cheerleaders are pictured cheering on the Pacers. For game coverage, see page 1B.

## S.C. House aims to rewrite vaccine allocation plan

BY MICHELLE LIU  
Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina lawmakers are vying to override the Department of Health and Environmental Control's board on an allocation plan meant to equitably distribute the state's limited coronavirus vaccine supply.

The House gave key approval Wednesday to the measure, part of a bill to direct up to \$200 million in state surplus funds to bolster the state's vaccine rollout.

The lawmakers' plan would direct the health department, DHEC, to allocate limited vaccine supplies across the state's four regions on a per capita basis, requiring it to take into account factors such as a region's rural and underserved areas, impoverished



House Ways and Means Chairman Murrell Smith, center, walks through the chamber during the House session on Wednesday in Columbia. The House gave key approval to a plan to alter how COVID-19 vaccines are distributed in South Carolina.

## S.C. passes 6,000 virus deaths

BY LANDON STAMPER  
stamper@aikenstandard.com

South Carolina health authorities confirmed 100 COVID-19 cases and three coronavirus-related deaths in Aiken County on Wednesday.

The deaths occurred between Jan. 9-22 and all of the victims were elderly.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control confirmed a total of 2,621 cases and 88 deaths across the state Wednesday. Wednesday's death count pushes the state to more than 6,000 deaths.

6,000 South Carolinians have now died from COVID-19.

The data reported Wednesday is for the date of Jan. 25.

DHEC announced Wednesday that South Carolina will start receiving a 10% increase in the number of COVID-19 vaccine first doses it receives each week. This will take the weekly number of doses received from 62,400 doses to 72,600 doses.

As of Jan. 27, South Carolina has received 668,450 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine and has administered 328,861 of those. There are currently 341,090 vaccine appointments scheduled throughout the state. Aiken Regional Medical Centers has received 1,965 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and has administered 1,892 of them.

Please see **VIRUS**, page 5A

**Numbers to call for vaccine appointments**  
DHCC Care Line: 855-472-3432  
Walmart, Edgefield Road in North Augusta: 803-613-3085

**Coronavirus cases as of Jan. 27**  
Aiken County cases — 10,388  
Aiken County deaths — 143  
South Carolina cases — 384,556  
South Carolina deaths — 6,030

VOLUME 106, No. 10  
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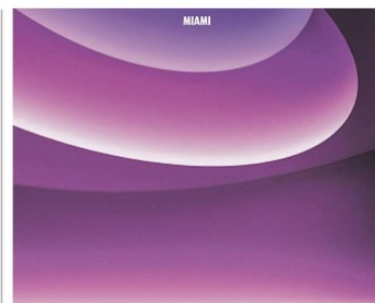
# Miami Herald

THE VIRUS CRISIS

## Dangerous U.K. variant has arrived in South Florida

■ A more-contagious strain of the virus that causes COVID-19 is in Miami-Dade and Broward, according to information from the Florida Department of Health.

BY REN COVARR



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# CITIZEN TIMES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



A woman receives a COVID-19 vaccine in New Hanover County as part of the Group 1B vaccination phase.

## NC vaccine rollout plan under fire

Some health care systems canceled appointments after receiving no additional doses this week

BY GORDON

Health officials recognized their recent decisions will cause greater shortages in certain areas this week.

By Jan. 25, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services directed every vaccine provider in the state to give out their entire supply of first doses.

At a press briefing Jan. 26, state health secretary Mandy Cohen said this directive was made after the federal government "put all states on notice" that having unused supply could limit the number of doses states receive in the future.

Cohen said 95% of all first doses in the state were administered by Jan. 25 deadline.

Yet after many hospitals and health departments administered most of their doses, the state didn't replenish their supplies.

Michael Heath, the former health-care executive in

## Council OKs distribution warehouse

Enka project to bring 355 jobs

JOEL BURGESS Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE — A warehouse whose operator has not been revealed but has many similarities to an Amazon distribution center has gotten final approval with a 5-2 vote from the City Council.

The council voted Jan. 26 to approve zoning for the \$30 million distribution center near Enka Village that will generate \$100,000 in annual city property taxes and employ 355 but that one council member criticized as not meeting long-term Asheville goals.

The Samet Corp., based in Greensboro, plans to build the 120,000-square-foot center on the site of the former American Enka plant, located between Smiley Park Highway and Sand Hill Road. The company has also committed to preserving the historic 19-foot tall clock tower American Enka erected in the late 1920s.

Voting to approve the 32-acre zoning change from Commercial Industrial District to Commercial Expansion/Conditional Zone were Mayor Esther Manheimer, Vice Mayor Sherika Smith, Sandra Kilgore, Antwanne Mosley and Gwen Wisler.

See WAREHOUSE, Page 2B

## Some NC school districts begin vaccinating employees

BY GORDON

With many North Carolina teachers still weeks, if not months, away from receiving COVID-19 vaccines, a few districts have already helped give shots to hundreds of staff members.

Jackson County Public Schools in Western North Carolina dismissed students early Jan. 22 so staff could get vaccinated. Since last week, public school employees in Rutherford County, Swain County and Union County received their first vaccine doses as well. In the Triad, Davie County Schools will make shots available to employees on Wednesday.

"It's been a challenging year for students and teachers and parents, but we do feel that with the vaccine there is light at the end of the tunnel," said

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# THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021  
"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17

IndyStar.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## ADAMS STREET MASS SHOOTING



## Weekly vaccine doses to rise soon

State's supply to jump 16% as more are eligible

Shari Rudavsky  
Indianapolis Star  
USA TODAY NETWORK

# Portland Press Herald

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021

pressherald.com

WEATHER:  
Partly cloudy  
and seasonable  
High 34  
Details, A12

## MASS VACCINATION CLINIC PLANNED IN BANGOR

Northern Light Health says it has partnered with Cross Insurance Center to open a site on Tuesday, with the ultimate goal of administering 2,000 doses daily, if supply allows.

By ERIC RUSSELL  
Bangor Press Herald  
The state's largest health care organization, announced Wednesday that it has partnered with the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor on a mass COVID-19 vaccination site.  
The site will officially launch Tuesday with the goal of administering 900 doses on that day and another 900 next Thursday. The site eventually will be able to accommodate as many as 900

vaccinations each day, if supply allows. Registrations for next week's slots opened at 2 p.m. on Wednesday and they were filled in less than two hours.  
Several more large-scale vaccination sites are in the planning stages, including one at Scarborough Downs, as the state looks to ramp up inoculations of Mainers 70 and older as part of Phase 1B. Already, health care organizations like Northern Light have been conducting smaller vaccination clinics because there

has been so low.  
"The smaller sites were a good stopgap measure to get shots into people's arms as quickly as possible to stop the spread of this deadly virus," Matt Marston, associate vice president for Northern Light Pharmacy, said in a statement. "As vaccine shipments increase in the coming weeks and months, the Cross Insurance Center site will allow Northern Light Health to be well-positioned to assist in the statewide vaccination effort."

## MAINE COVID-19 VACCINE TRACKER

1ST DOSES GIVEN: 92,498  
Percent of the population: 8.4%  
2ND DOSES GIVEN: 2,670  
Percent of the population: 0.26%  
SOURCES: Maine Center for Disease Control and U.S. Census Bureau

Meanwhile, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention released additional demographic details late Wednesday afternoon on the site under

■ BRIEFINGS RESUME: White House offers sobering warning about projected death toll in the next four weeks / A6  
■ GRADUAL STEPS: As COVID-19 infection rates moderate, states cautiously lift restrictions on some businesses / A6  
race and county of residence of the people who have received vaccine shots.

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# The Fresno Bee

## COVID-19 among top causes of death in Fresno County

By TIM SHEERAN  
fresnobee.com

The novel coronavirus was named for the deaths of 711 Fresno County residents in 2020, from the first reported fatality from COVID-19 in April through the end of the year.  
That's more than the average number of lives lost in Fresno County to almost all leading causes of death for the nine-month period from 2016 through 2019, according to data

from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Health Statistics. Only heart disease and cancer claimed more lives on average between April and December in that four-year span.  
While the first vaccines against COVID-19 became available on an emergency basis in mid-December, the pace of deaths from the coronavirus has only accelerated in Fresno County - 230 death certificates recorded in December and more

than 370 through the first 3½ weeks of January listed COVID-19 as the cause of death, the Fresno County Department of Public Health has reported.  
Just before Christmas, county officials said the rising number of deaths was forcing hospitals and the county morgue to bring in refrigerated trailer units to serve as temporary morgue space.  
As of Tuesday, the county's death toll from the coronavirus stands at more than 1,080. It can be numbing just to see

this slow accrual of fatality numbers" from COVID-19, Fresno County interim health officer Dr. Raul Vohra said late last week. "Obviously it's very heartbreaking that we now have passed this grim milestone of 1,000 deaths here in our county."  
Across the central San Joaquin Valley - Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced and Tulare counties - more than 2,000 lives have been lost to COVID-19 in the pandemic.

DEADLIEST IN JANUARY  
The number of coronavirus deaths in Fresno County has increased by more than half just since Jan. 1. In both December and January, coronavirus ranks as the leading cause of deaths compared to averages for those months - higher even than heart disease and cancer.  
By contrast, influenza and pneumonia - sometimes compared by some who have expressed doubt about the severity of COVID-19 - claimed an April-December average of about 91 lives in 2016 through 2019.  
The April-December averages for the leading causes of death in Fresno County in 2016-2019, and COVID-19 in 2020, are:  
■ Heart diseases: 1,168  
■ Cancers: 998  
■ COVID-19 (2020): 711  
■ Accidents: 324  
SEE COVID-19, B1

# Texarkana Gazette

\$2.00 | THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 | texarkana gazette.com | 3 SECTIONS, 20 PAGES

## Vaccine-seekers can cross state line — in one direction

By KARL RICHTER

Texarkana Gazette  
TEXARKANA — Whether locals can cross the state line to get a coronavirus vaccination depends on which direction they are going.  
Texas has no residency requirements for those who receive a vaccination in the state, so Arkansas residents are free to seek their shots on the Texas side.

Arkansas officials, however, have asked providers in the state to vaccinate only those who live or work there.  
"We have encouraged our vaccinators to vaccinate Arkansas residents or those living outside the state but working in Arkansas. We do encourage pharmacies to follow these guidelines and they can check this when a patient scheduled an appointment or joins a waitlist," a spokesperson for the Arkansas Department of Health said via email.  
It was unclear Wednesday whether the two Texarkana, Arkansas, pharmacies now providing vaccinations — College Hill Drug and Walmart — are checking patients' residency.  
A recorded message refers people who call College Hill Drug to its website for more information about coronavirus vaccination. The site does not answer whether residency will be checked before vaccinations are administered. But an online form used to join the pharmacy's vaccination waiting list requires checking which Arkansas county one lives in.  
Walmart pharmacy staff could not be reached for comment Wednesday.  
The Texarkana, Texas, and Bowie County, Texas, governments would not impose a residency requirement for the vaccine even if they could, a spokesperson for the local emergency joint operations center said. In December, CHRISTUS St. Michael Health county one lives in.

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# The Times-Picayune

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## N.O. to ease coronavirus restrictions

Restaurant, gathering capacity expanded; indoor bar service remains banned

By JESSICA WILLIAMS

New Orleans restaurants can double the number of customers they're currently allowed to serve, and gatherings of up to 25 people can also resume under eased coronavirus restrictions that will begin Friday, city officials said.  
But bars will remain closed

to indoor service through Mardi Gras regardless of whether coronavirus data would allow for the reopening under state rules. That restriction, which does a slow but steady ban on bars, was put in place by the state in late December. The ban prompted New Orleans public schools on Wednesday to announce a return to in-person learning next month. And leaders said the improved numbers offered a chance to make

at least a few small changes to business restrictions.  
"The small strides we've made will allow us to inch back toward normalcy," New Orleans Health Department Director Dr. Jennifer Duggins said during a news conference Wednesday.  
Residents had been told to hold gatherings larger than that of a typical household in

at least a few small changes to business restrictions.  
"The small strides we've made will allow us to inch back toward normalcy," New Orleans Health Department Director Dr. Jennifer Duggins said during a news conference Wednesday.  
Residents had been told to hold gatherings larger than that of a typical household in

"modified Phase 2" beginning at 6 a.m. Friday. In addition to restaurants, other businesses, including retail stores, gyms and salons, will be allowed to move back to 50% capacity. Indoor event venues will be allowed to host 10 people, and outdoor event venues will be allowed to host 25 people over the next three weeks, said Duggins and City Hall spokeswoman Bern Tivell.  
► SEE RESTRICTIONS, page 5A

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021

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## Biden rolls out climate policies

EARLY DIALOGUE WITH MANCHIN PROMISING

By Matthew Daly and Ellen Knickmeyer ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — In the most ambitious U.S. effort to stave off the worst of climate change, President Joe Biden signed executive orders Wednesday to transform the nation's heavily fossil-fuel powered economy into a clean-burning one, pausing oil and gas leasing on federal land and targeting subsidies for those industries.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., incoming Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said in a press release that the Biden administration had been in touch with the senior senator from West Virginia, and said, "This executive order will not impact energy activity like drilling or permitting on existing leases."

"They informed me they are pausing new oil and gas leases on federal lands in order to fully evaluate the state of production on current leases," Manchin said. "Currently, 53 percent of onshore acres leased and 77 percent of offshore acres leased have no active production. It is prudent to evaluate if taxpayers are receiving a fair return for the use of their resources."

CLIMATE - 12A

## W.Va. expects more Covid vaccine doses next week

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO RAISE ALLOCATION

By Charles Boothe

NEW RIVER DRIVE

## RAIN HALTS REPAIRS

Mayor can't give an estimate of when road will reopen

By Jessica Farris THE REGISTER-HERALD

Rainfall and melting snow on New River Drive temporarily halted construction and will further delay the opening of the road, Beckley Mayor Rob Rappold announced Wednesday.

Steady rain showers and warmer temperatures on Sunday and Monday raised the water levels of a small stream along New River Drive and flooded a channel, Rappold said on Wednesday that the channel must be dry for construction to resume.

Preliminary National Weather Service records show a record 1.52 inches of rain fell in Beckley on Monday, while an additional 40 inches fell on Tuesday.

"We got almost two inches (of rain) in 21 hours," said Rappold. "In addition, we had the snow melt, and people don't realize what that does to the construction project."

REPAIRS - 12A



NICK BARBERO/THE REGISTER-HERALD

New River Drive has been closed to traffic since August after culverts running beneath the roadway caved and caused a dangerous dip. The recent heavy rain has halted construction on new culverts.

GRASSROOTS EFFORT UNDERWAY



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