

California virus deaths top 30,000 after deadliest weekend

11 January 2021, by John Antczak



In this Jan. 5, 2021 file photo a LifeLine Ambulance arrives at the CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center (CHA HPMC) in Los Angeles. California health authorities reported on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, a record high of 695 coronavirus deaths as many hospitals strain under unprecedented caseloads. The state Department of Public Health says the number raises the state's death toll since the start of the pandemic to 29,233. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

California's coronavirus catastrophe reached a staggering new level Monday as Johns Hopkins University data showed the nation's most populous state has recorded more than 30,000 deaths since the pandemic started nearly a year ago.

Deaths have exploded since a COVID-19 surge began in October. It took California six months to record its first 10,000 deaths. But in barely a month, the total rose from 20,000 to 30,000.

Over the weekend, state officials reported a two-day record of 1,163 deaths. Hospitalizations also have exploded and many hospitals are stretched to the limit.

California ranks third nationally in coronavirus deaths, behind Texas and New York, which is in

the No. 1 position with nearly 40,000.

Health officials have warned the worst is yet to come later this month, when there's full picture on infections from the holidays.

In Los Angeles County, deaths have topped 12,000 and confirmed coronavirus cases have surpassed 900,000.

During the weekend, county Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer characterized the spread of the virus as "immense" and said it reflected unsafe things people did during the holidays, making any activity outside a household much more risky.

"This is just not the time to go to the shopping mall or to a friend's house to watch a basketball or football game," Ferrer said.



In this July 7, 2020, file photo, hospital staff members enter an elevator with the body of a COVID-19 victim on a gurney at St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, Calif. California health authorities reported on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, a record high of 695 coronavirus deaths as many hospitals strain under unprecedented caseloads. The state Department of Public Health says the number raises the state's death toll since the start of the pandemic to 29,233. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)

Los Angeles County, meanwhile, announced it will stop using Curative COVID-19 tests at pop-up testing sites after a U.S. Food and Drug Administration alert to patients and health care providers that the test could produce false negatives.

The department said Curative PCR tests at the pop-up sites between Dec. 13 and Jan. 2 made up about 10% of all COVID-19 tests administered at county-supported test sites during that same time frame. The switch to Fulgent Genetics tests will take place this week.

In San Diego, cars filed into a parking lot near the downtown baseball stadium Monday after San Diego County opened a vaccination super station aimed at inoculating 5,000 health care workers a day.

The first day was limited to 2,500 people to work out kinks. Medical staff was on hand in a row of white tents with shots to inject health care workers as they passed through in their vehicles and then were directed to wait for 15 minutes to be observed for any reactions.

The city of Los Angeles announced late Sunday that its huge COVID-19 testing site at Dodger Stadium will be transformed into a massive vaccination center by the end of the week.

"This shift in resources will temporarily reduce testing capacity in LA County, but it will more than triple the number of daily vaccines available to be dispersed to Angelenos," a city statement said.

The first COVID-19 case in California was confirmed Jan. 25. The death of a San Jose woman on Feb. 6 is the first known U.S. death from COVID-19.



In this Jan. 7, 2021 file photo a medical worker walks past a refrigerated trailer parked outside the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. California health authorities reported on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021, a record high of 695 coronavirus deaths as many hospitals strain under unprecedented caseloads. The state Department of Public Health says the number raises the state's death toll since the start of the pandemic to 29,233. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

Many of the state's hospitals are out of regular intensive care beds for the sickest COVID-19 patients.

The hardest-hit areas are 15 counties in Southern California and the agricultural San Joaquin Valley. Those counties comprise a majority of the state's population, including many lower-income residents who may live in crowded areas or work in jobs that place them in close contact with customers or other employees, increasing their risk of infection.

Hospitals in the counties have been ordered to delay non-essential elective surgeries, such as knee replacements, to make room.

The biggest fear is that after a surge of cases from Christmas and New Year's gatherings hospitals will be tipped into rationing care—apportioning care on the basis of who has the best chance of survival.

Lawmakers and public health officials say that surge on top of a surge would involve people who

were infected when they ignored social distancing rules to gather with friends and relatives during the holidays.

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