

Del Norte County reports 21 COVID deaths

September 20, 2021



Del Norte County has among the highest incidence of COVID-19 in the state with an average of 30 new cases every day.

21 have died of COVID-19 in the last three weeks, according to Sutter Coast Hospital, which presented its findings at the weekly Del Norte County COVID-19 Surge update Thursday. Of those deaths, 100% were unvaccinated.

This is against the backdrop of Del Norte County pacing at 44.6% vaccination rates. That's about 13% less than the California average.

"Del Norte County has the highest rate of transmission according to the Centers for Disease control," said Public Health Official Dr. Aaron Stutz. "Early detection is important. If you're having trouble breathing, if your symptoms are possibly COVID related, get help early."

Seventeen of the 21 deaths were in the hospital. That means four people didn't make it before getting care. Part of that reason, according to Stutz, may be that people are unaware that their symptoms are COVID

related or they have resistance to the notion that COVID can be deadly.

“A large portion of our unvaccinated patients in critical care are younger,” said Sutter Coast Hospital Spokesperson Ellie Popadic. People between 18 and 49 were especially hard hit with 1,777 new cases.

Dr. Stutz reported that the surge of COVID began in August and he expects it will take two to three months to fully resolve. Meantime, he urged cooperation.

“People who are unvaccinated make up 100% of the deaths,” he said. “We’re hoping to see that vaccination rate go up. But also, please avoid large gatherings and wear your masks.”

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Harris, pointed to a problem with parents sending symptomatic kids to school.

“1.5% COVID positive people result in a 12% quarantine rate” said Harris.

Right now Del Norte schools have 313 people out on quarantine. Harris asked that parents keep a closer eye on their kids.

“Children walk into school symptomatic. If your child has symptoms, keep them home,” he said.

Stutz agreed, saying that wearing a mask and staying home if you’re sick is the best hope for keeping kids in school which he described as the “utmost importance” for overall public health and benefit.

“If we figure out how to do this, I really feel this is the way through the pandemic,” Stutz said.

He also pleaded with those infected to get early treatment with Monoclonal Antibody Therapy.

“It’s a needle stick. It gives your body the antibodies to fight the virus,” Stutz said.

Among the grimmer questions asked in the weekly meeting from the public was about a refrigeration truck in front of the mortuary in Crescent City. The rumor on social media sites has been that the truck was part of the city’s posturing to frighten people into getting vaccinated.

“It’s really being used. There are currently 27 cases at the mortuary. It’s normally six to seven cases. The mortuary is unable to keep up with the deaths,” said City Manager Eric Wier.

Rural counties throughout California, especially those in Northern California, have tended to be less vaccinated and have higher rates of infection according to California health officials, but according to the tracking data of new cases, Del Norte County is among the hardest hit in the state.