

As mask mandate lifted, Omicron continues to surge

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At the state of California begins lifting COVID-19 mandates, the Omicron variant was still raging in Del Norte County.

On Monday, the county reported 81 new COVID cases, bringing the case count over the last two weeks to 481. Del Norte County Public Health reported 276 active COVID cases with nine people in the hospital. Del Norte County did report one new death in the last week, bringing the death count since the pandemic began to 43.

There was also a new outbreak reported at Pelican Bay State Prison, with 13 new cases in the last week. Cases at the prison are not included in the community case count.

Since the beginning of the pandemic almost exactly two years ago, Del Norte County has reported 5,727 COVID cases. Just more than half have been among men with 76% of cases in people under age 50.

After weeks of high case counts and low hospitalizations, the number of people in the hospital has ticked up in the last week. A week ago, four people were hospitalized, but that number has ranged between eight and 11 for the last six days.

As of Monday, Del Norte County reported 54.9% of residents 12 and over are fully vaccinated with another 7.1% partially vaccinated.

Del Norte County Public Health did announce due to the Presidents Day holiday, the COVID-19 vaccine site behind Sutter Coast Hospital will be closed from Friday through Monday. The clinic will re-open at 9 a.m. Tuesday. The clinic offers vaccines and booster shots.

At Del Norte County schools, masks are still required, but the district is making some changes due to changing recommendations from the California Department of Public Health. Superintendent Jeff Harris explained the changes in a message to parents this week.

“In response to changing COVID guidelines, we hosted a webinar last Wednesday that provided an update on the recent changes made by CDPH,” Harris said. “During that webinar, we let families know we have transitioned to a group-tracing approach for students exposed to COVID-19 in a K-12 setting. As a result, students who are exposed to a positive case may still attend school as long as they are asymptomatic. CDPH recommends but does not require that the student test within 3-5 days after their last exposure, regardless of vaccination status. This means that whole class quarantines have basically ended.”