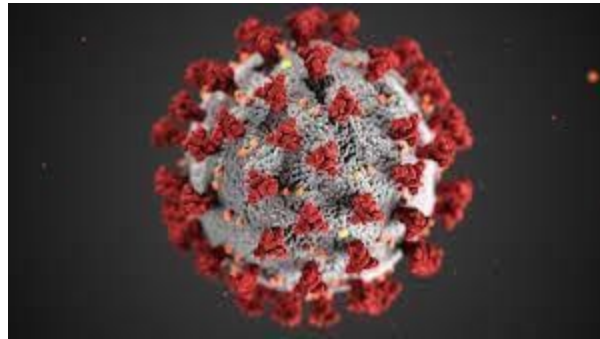


California taking steps to slow down COVID

November 19, 2020



With COVID-19 cases rising quickly in California, the state is taking steps to slow down the surge.

On Monday, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced almost the entire state was being put on tier 1 restrictions. One of the exceptions is Del Norte County, which is on tier 2, or red, restrictions.

"We are sounding the alarm," said Governor Newsom. "California is experiencing the fastest increase in cases we have seen yet – faster than what we experienced at the outset of the pandemic or even this summer. The spread of COVID-19, if left unchecked, could quickly overwhelm our health care system and lead to catastrophic outcomes. That is why we are pulling an emergency brake in the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. Now is the time to do all we can – government at all levels and Californians across the state – to flatten the curve again as we have done before."

Under the tier 2 restrictions, some non-essential businesses will be closed. Schools that have reopened can remain open but additional testing for teachers will be mandated.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of California Health and Human Services, urged Californians to follow the science to slow the spread.

In the first week of November, California saw its fast surge in cases since the pandemic began in March. New cases rose by 47 percent in that week, topping the surge seen in June when cases rose by 37 percent.

"Certainly cases are on the rise here in California, and we are concerned," Ghaly said. "We always hope to have positive news, but this isn't positive news. Cases are rapidly rising."

Ghaly reminded California residents to abstain from high-risk activities. What exactly are high-risk activities? According to Ghaly, they include:

- * Activities that make it difficult to wear a mask the entire time, such as eating and drinking.

- * Activities with people outside your household.
- * Activities where it is difficult to social distance.
- * Activities of a long duration, more than 60 to 90 minutes.
- * Activities indoors that don't allow fresh air to circulate.

A big step the state took last week was issuing a travel advisory, along with Oregon and Washington. The three states asked their residents to stop all non-essential travel.

"We encourage Californians to stay close to home, to avoid non-essential travel to other states, other countries and, frankly, across the state," Ghaly said. "We think this is how we can add to our toolkit to avoid cases. This is all very fluid. These rates of rise are very concerning. We're always looking at what is going to help us keep all Californians safe. If a strengthened travel advisory is needed, we will look at that."

In addition to limiting travel, the three states are asking all people who come into their states from elsewhere to voluntarily quarantine for 14 days. During that two-week period, anyone coming from out of state is urged to limit contact to those they live with.

Ghaly said the travel advisory is just an advisory now. He said the state hopes number will begin to go down and stronger steps won't be needed.

One key for all in the state, Ghaly said, is to limit gatherings with people outside your home.

"When you are gathering with others, have it outdoors because that reduces risk," he said.

To slow down the spread, California is asking residents to do the following:

- * Check with your local health authorities. Ghaly said cases are different in different counties and regions, so it's always best to check with local officials.
- * Wear a mask.
- * Keep your distance from others.
- * Keep gatherings small, with no more than two others families.
- * Keep gatherings short.
- * Keep windows open when indoors.
- * Protect older and at-risk friends and families.

"Just over 10 percent of our cases are over the age of 65, but that group makes up 70 percent of our deaths in California," Ghaly said.

At this point in time, California officials are asking residents to take steps to slow the COVID spread. But if more is needed, more will be done, Ghaly said.

"We are not looking, today, at a statewide stay-at-home order," Ghaly said. "Californians are sick and tired. This is a rapidly-evolving situation, and we will do what it takes to protect all Californians."