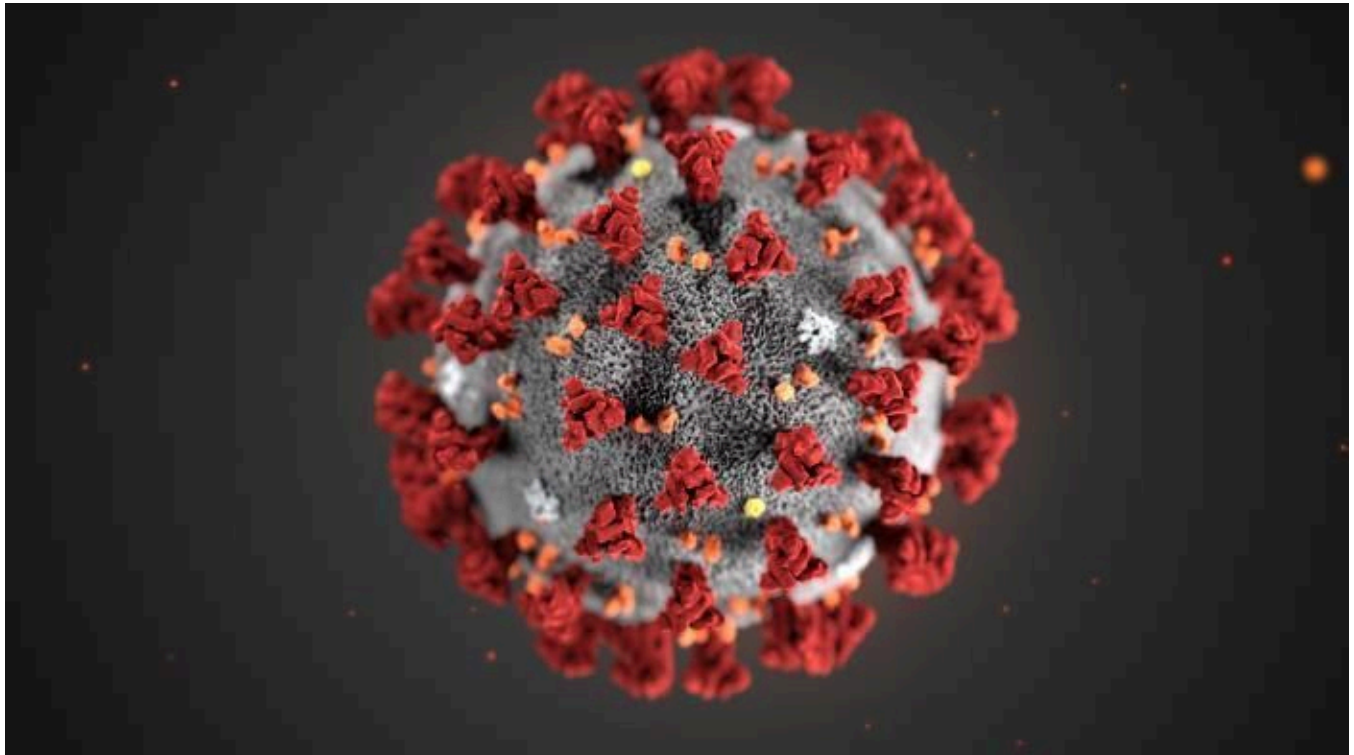


A COVID-19 update

December 12, 2020



The new statewide plan for stay at home has just been released. I shouldn't really say new, because it is not new in concept, we have been in shelter in place before. What is new is the way it's going to happen.

Many counties have been asking for months, to have the different regions of the state treated differently during this pandemic, because we all know that there is a big difference from our part of the state and the opposite end of the state. The state health department saw the common sense behind the proposal, and some time ago, asked us local health officers to chime in on the process. The end result is what was described last week during the press announcements. California is now divided into five regions with regard to regional public health issues, and the first use of this setup is to implement the stay at home order by region.

This means that the key indicator of impact to a region (ICU bed capacity) is going to be measured in all the counties in our region and used to decide when that order impacts us. As of this last weekend, the order went into effect for counties in the southern half of the state, because their remaining ICU bed capacity was less than 15% of the total available. That's a bad place to be when case counts are on the rise for this virus. We may be close behind, as the numbers are going to be measured daily, and by the time you read this, it may

already be in effect. Once invoked, the stay at home order remains in place for at least three weeks, sort of a cool down time, to slow the virus down and take the strain off of the medical system.

The order has some differences from last, mainly about schools, as they are not included at this time. Places of worship are also not treated differently than under the tier restrictions, and since we were all pretty much in purple tier, the rules for that tier remain in effect. Restaurants and bars serving food can continue to offer take out, and retail can continue at 20% capacity, however that works out. Dentists and medical offices can remain open, other “essential services” as before, can remain open. But all the other things that have been able to be open this summer, such as family entertainment, museums, aquariums, playgrounds, hair salons, personal care services, etc. are going to have to close up shop when the order takes place. There will be a lot more detail posted online, if and when the order takes effect for our region.

We also wanted to clarify what has happened locally. Our case counts have jumped quite a bit, on the order of five times as many as we were dealing with this time last month. There is no reason to believe that the numbers are going to drop, and in fact, they will probably increase. In that regard, we are no different than the rest of the region. Our small team was hit pretty hard the last two weeks, and we have pivoted a bit, and drawn in some more staff to help with the effort.

The situation dashboard is what we heard the most about last week, and the lack of updates. We have new county staff taking much of this project off the plate for us at public health, so we can focus on the immediate need of keeping up with new cases and contacts. That work is still critical, and we cannot let that down, even for a day. We hope to be able to get the dashboard fully updated with details sometime later this week, but the totals of cases should be able to be reported pretty regularly, as well as activity at the hospital.