



CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

A weekly digest to keep you up to speed on the California coronavirus outbreak.

January 27, 2021

Welcome to the 46th issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter. Before we get started with this week's news, we want to make sure you're aware that after a seven-week shutdown, the DRE is opening its exam centers. [Learn more here.](#)

In This Issue:

- [The Economy & Your Finances: Jobless claims fall nationwide, rise in California](#)
- [The Market & Industry: Eviction and foreclosure moratoriums extended](#)
- [Around the State: California stay-at-home order lifted](#)
- [Health Check-Up: Moderna vaccine less effective against South African variant](#)

The Economy & Your Finances: Jobless claims fall nationwide, rise in California

Nationwide jobless claims fell slightly last week to [900,000](#). But in California, unemployment continues to rise. In December, the state lost [52,200 jobs](#), 37 percent of all American jobs lost during that month. While the United States has recovered 56 percent of all jobs lost since the pandemic hit, California has only recovered 44 percent.

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) continues to [struggle with delays](#) as it tries to weed out fraudulent claims. The [unemployment claim backlog](#), down from its peak of 1.5 million claims last summer, is now at over 940,000. In response, EDD has extended the time for suspended claimants to verify their identity through the [ID.me](#) service to 30 days. EDD has also begun sending PUA and traditional UI claimants their tax form 1099G for 2020. As a reminder, [EDD benefits are taxable by the federal government but not at the state level](#).

Last week, President Biden signed [several executive orders](#) addressing the coronavirus pandemic. Components of these orders include: requiring that Americans [mask up for travel](#) and while on federal property; asking the Department of Agriculture to consider increasing its [Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer](#) program; and asking the Labor Department to set out rules clarifying that workers have the right to turn down work that risks their health during the pandemic.

In California relief efforts, the dates for the second round of [California Small Business Relief Grant](#) applications have been announced. Applications reopen on February 2, 2021 and close less than one week later on February 8, 2021. Round 2 will be the final application window for the program, so don't forget to apply during this time if you are interested in obtaining a grant. If you applied during the previous application window but did not receive a grant, do not reapply – your application will still be considered during the second round of grant approvals.

Sources: AP News, CAL Matters, ABC 7 News, NBC News, The Mercury News, CNBC, KCRA

The Market & Industry: Eviction and foreclosure moratoriums extended

The Federal Housing Finance Authority (FHFA) [extended its foreclosure moratorium](#) on properties backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac through February 28. With [nearly 20 percent](#) of American renters behind on payments, President Biden signed an executive order [extending the nationwide eviction ban](#) through March. And California lawmakers [introduced a bill](#) that, if passed by the legislature, would extend California's partial eviction moratorium through June for tenants who can't pay their rent due to COVID-19.

Home sales in California have [noticeably downshifted](#) since mid-December, which is typical for the beginning of a new year. Pending sales suggest the upward trend will resume in the next few weeks. Mortgage rates continue to hover [near historic lows](#), and while rates are likely to rise in the near future, they should remain low enough to be very attractive to home buyers.

This week, the Legislature introduced SB 91, a bill that provides financial assistance to qualifying housing providers and tenants of up to 80 percent of the unpaid rent accrued since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that this bill, part of a larger budget package, will be quickly passed and signed into law. C.A.R. has taken a formal "neutral" position on SB 91. [Learn more here](#).

[Housing production](#) is up significantly; 2020 closed out with the highest production numbers since September 2006. But the National Association of Home Builders warns [rising lumber prices](#) and increased regulatory costs could impede future production.

Sources: REALTOR® Magazine, Time Magazine, The San Francisco Chronicle, Inman News, C.A.R. Research & Economics, CNBC

Around the State: California stay-at-home order lifted

On Monday, Governor Newsom [canceled the statewide stay-at-home order](#). All counties returned to the color-coded tier system, most at the purple tier. Whether the change lessens

restrictions is largely up to local leaders, who are allowed to go beyond the state's rules and shut down additional activities. The [test positivity rate is falling](#), along with hospitalizations, and the death rate has been steadily declining even through the recent surge. Even so, the surge is not yet over. As of 9:18 a.m. this morning, the statewide average for ICU bed availability is 0 percent, and the state is averaging a 12.4 percent positivity rate for tests. Cases in California numbered 3,214,777, deaths had reached 38,250, and 2,587,736 people have received vaccinations.

California's vaccine rollout is the [worst in the nation](#), judging by percentage of shots used. The state still [does not have enough supply](#) to meet demand from those currently eligible to receive a vaccine. The California Department of Public Health has launched a pilot website, [My Turn](#), on which you can enter your information and register to be notified when you become eligible for vaccination. As of writing, only healthcare workers and individuals 65 and older in Los Angeles and San Diego Counties can book appointments immediately.

Sources: Los Angeles Times, SF Gate, KTLA, California Department of Public Health, The San Francisco Chronicle

Health Check-Up: Moderna vaccines less effective against South African variant

Cases of the [COVID-19 variant known as B.1.1.7](#), which first originated in the United Kingdom, have been confirmed in California. Given that this variant has the potential to infect significantly more people than the original, experts recommend being even more rigorous with self-protection efforts. Wear [more than one mask](#) — or a single mask with more than one layer — to better protect yourself and others against transmission from airborne particles. Other advice includes: Stay home as much as possible, cut down on trips to the grocery store and avoid gathering with people outside your household.

Another variant, [B.1.351](#) — which first originated in South Africa — continues to worry scientists. Researchers from Moderna revealed that while its vaccine protects against both the B.1.1.7 and

B.1.351 variants, its vaccine [may be less effective](#) against the B.1.351 strain. Moderna will launch at least two clinical efforts to add additional protection against variants.

Scientists discovered a [new coronavirus strain](#), B.1.426, that seems to have originated in California. This new strain could be partly to blame for the recent surge in cases statewide. Scientists are still working to determine whether this new strain has mutation that impact its transmissibility.

Sources: The New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, CNBC, Los Angeles Times



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