

CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

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

February 17, 2021

Welcome to the 49th 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 of the new [Vaccination Resources](#) page on the coronavirus microsite.

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The Economy & Your Finances: California outpaces nation on jobless claims

U.S. [jobless claims](#) fell slightly to 793,000, pointing to a still-elevated number of layoffs — prior to the pandemic, weekly applications for jobless aid never topped 700,000, even during the Great Recession. Yet while the pace of new unemployment claims is dropping nationwide, in [California](#), unemployment claims are rising. While California workers account for 12 percent of the nation's labor force, California accounts for 16.1 percent of all jobless claims filed nationwide.

Economists found that the [bulk of new jobless claims](#) recorded in late 2020 were from individuals who had already been laid off earlier in the pandemic. In California, 77 percent of all new benefit claims filed in the last week of November were “additional claims” triggered by a repeat pandemic layoff. The high rate of additional claims suggests employment markets, particularly in the food services and accommodation industries, remain unstable.

This week, the House of Representatives Budget Committee will put together a [final bill](#) based on President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion stimulus package proposal. The House bill as it currently stands would provide direct payments worth up to \$1,400 per person for individuals earning less than \$75,000 per year. The bill would also increase the federal weekly unemployment boost from \$300 to \$400 through August 29. The bill could pass the House as early as next week, though it could face obstacles in the Senate.

Sources: ABC News, The Mercury News, CNBC, CNN

The Market & Industry: Forbearance and foreclosure relief extended

Yesterday, President Biden announced the [extension of forbearance and foreclosure relief programs](#). Homeowners with loans through the Federal Housing Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Department of Veterans can now enroll in forbearance through June 30 to delay payments for up to 18 months. Borrowers with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac can delay their payments for up to 15 months, but they must enroll by end of February.

Housing demand is [stronger than normal](#) thus far, with tight supply continuing to raise home values. Weekly new listings are increasing, and sellers are growing more positive about the market. Even so, prices are not expected to drop in the near future.

Demand for [vacation homes](#) remains elevated, with mortgage demand for a second home jumping 84 percent year over year in January. Last September, demand was even higher — up 118 percent year over year. This highly competitive vacation home market hints at the United States' [uneven financial recovery](#): Many low-income Americans are struggling financially while high earners benefit from rising home values and stock portfolios.

Sources: C.A.R. Research & Economics, REALTOR® Magazine, Redfin

Around the State: Millions more added to vaccine eligibility list in California

For the first time in three months, California is [averaging fewer daily COVID-19 cases](#) than it was during the summer peak. Hospitalization rates are also dropping, although the [death rate](#) continues to hold steady. As of 9:40 a.m. this morning, the statewide average for ICU bed availability is 17.2 percent, and the state is averaging a 6.5 percent positivity rate for tests. Cases in California numbered 3,478,717, deaths had reached 47,509, and 6,262,781 people have received vaccinations.

Last week, California added between four and six million people to the [eligibility list](#) for COVID-19 vaccination. Beginning on March 15, people between 16 and 64 years old who are disabled or at high risk for morbidity and mortality will be eligible for vaccination. Even so, officials warn supply remains limited, and successfully obtaining a vaccination appointment will likely remain a frustrating process.

The [underlying conditions](#) explicitly stated under the latest guidance include cancer, chronic kidney disease of stage four or above, chronic pulmonary disease, Down syndrome, immunocompromised immune system from solid organ transplant, pregnancy, sickle cell disease, heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies (excluding hypertension), severe obesity, and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Meanwhile, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said he anticipates vaccines will be available to the [general public](#) nationwide by late May or early June.

On Monday, a [distribution contract with Blue Shield](#) went into effect that California hopes will prepare the state to be able to vaccinate up to 3 million people a week by March 1. The contract is meant to smooth out what has so far been a bumpy vaccination rollout process across the state. More mass vaccination sites are opening: On Tuesday, vaccinations began at Levi's Stadium, which could accommodate up to 15,000 appointments a day with adequate supply. And a joint effort between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) opened [large-scale vaccination sites](#) at California State University, Los Angeles, and Oakland-Alameda Coliseum. Both have the capacity to vaccinate up to 6,000 people per day.

Sources: The Mercury News, The Hill, Los Angeles Times, CNN

Health Check-Up: Double-masking significantly boosts protection

New research for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms that [wearing two masks significantly boosts protection](#) against the coronavirus. If exposed to an unmasked person's cough, a person wearing both a surgical mask and a cloth mask would see their

exposure reduced by 86 percent. Experts recommend a surgical mask worn with a snugly fitted cloth mask.

Doctors are reporting a striking increase in cases of the COVID-19-linked [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children](#) (MIS-C). And patients diagnosed with MIS-C are presenting with much more severe symptoms than during earlier phases of the pandemic. The condition remains rare, with 2,060 cases and 30 deaths recorded in the United States. Many of the patients were previously healthy and experienced few or no symptoms from their initial COVID infection.

Sources: The San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times



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