

# San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

LOCAL // BAY AREA & STATE

## California surpasses 500,000 coronavirus cases, capping off deadliest month yet

Catherine Ho July 31, 2020 Updated: July 31, 2020 9:38 p.m.



Nurse Rosemary MacLeod (left) performs a Covid-19 test on nurse Pauline Tran at Laguna Honda hospital on Thursday, June 25, 2020 in San Francisco, California.

Photo: Gabrielle Lurie / The Chronicle

California became the first state to surpass 500,000 confirmed coronavirus cases Friday, capping off a month that saw more new infections and deaths than any other since the pandemic began.

The state reported 267,974 new cases in July — more than half of the state’s total cases since the start of the pandemic, and more than double the previous monthly record of 120,177 in June, according to Chronicle data as of Friday afternoon.

And 3,137 Californians died from COVID-19 in July, a 64% increase compared with June.

The latest surge in cases, hospitalizations and deaths stems largely from behaviors dating to Memorial Day and early June, public health experts say. The state and many counties at that time began reopening businesses, and residents who had grown restless under shelter-in-place orders began to resume activities with friends and family.

Because it takes time for the virus to incubate, the result of that behavior is hitting now. The results manifest themselves in waves, starting with cases, followed by hospitalizations and deaths. Early June also marked the beginning of Black Lives Matter protests, during which thousands of people crowded the streets across the state and the country, many without masks.

“Everything coincided at the same time,” said Dr. George Lemp, an infectious-disease epidemiologist and retired director of the California HIV/AIDS research program at the University of California. “Opening up. Memorial Day weekend. There were lots of people pent up and sheltering in place for a long time. Everyone went out and failed to social distance and wear masks.”

The Bay Area, similarly, saw new infections and deaths reach grim new highs in July. The region, which has generally fared better than many other major U.S. metropolitan areas, reported 27,247 new cases in July — a 132% jump compared with the previous high in June. And 239 Bay Area residents died from the virus in July, a 77% increase compared to the previous month.

For the first time since the pandemic began, the state has recorded more than 200 deaths in a 24-hour-period. According to data collected by The Chronicle, the daily death toll has reached 205, and counting.

In total, 501,030 cases have been recorded statewide, including 9,229 deaths. The Bay Area has seen 53,188 cases, including 821 deaths.

There are indications that the rise in cases, while still growing, is starting to slow. The seven-day average of new cases fell from 9,881 per day last week to 8,322 per day this week, according to the California Department of Public Health.

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