

Florida sets record with 216 coronavirus deaths

July 29 2020



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Florida recorded 216 novel coronavirus deaths on Wednesday, setting another record as one of the pandemic hot spots in the United States.

The new toll shattered a record set just the day before with 186 fatalities. The overall death toll from the pandemic in Florida is now

6,333, the state health department said.

The number of new cases of COVID-19 reported Wednesday was 9,446, down slightly from the daily total of around 10,000 that has been the norm for weeks.

A total of 451,423 people have been infected with the virus in the Sunshine State, which has a population of 21 million.

Florida recently overtook New York in terms of total caseload and is now second only to California, which has a population twice that of Florida.

A quarter of all of Florida's cases are in Miami.

Already facing delays, the state announced Wednesday that it would be closing all of its testing sites from 5 pm (2200 GMT) Thursday until further notice due to an approaching tropical storm.

"All sites have free standing structures including tents and other equipment, which cannot withstand tropical storm force winds, and could cause damage to people and property if not secured," the Florida Division of Emergency Management said in a statement.

The storm, which was gaining on Puerto Rico late Wednesday with sustained winds of 50 miles (80 kilometers) per hour, is expected to reach Cuba and southern Florida by the end of the week, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Nationwide, the US COVID-19 death toll now stands at 149,407, according to the Johns Hopkins University tracker.

The approval rating of Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis has

plunged over the past month over his handling of the crisis.

Back in May he bragged that he had managed to control the pandemic, in a speech in which he accused the media of spreading panic.

DeSantis, a close ally of President Donald Trump, has refused to make mask-wearing obligatory state wide, although some mayors have.

Florida, which charges no sales tax and lives off tourism, scrambled to bring back visitors in May and June as its economy tanked under lockdown measures and it seemed the pandemic was under control.

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