

France tightens screws on public activities to fight COVID

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A man wearing protective a face mask as precaution against the conoravirus walk at Trocadero plaza near Eiffel Tower in Paris, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. France sees a substantial increase of Covid-19 cases. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

Two of France's biggest cities with COVID-19 infection rates gathering speed even faster than the national surge in new cases are tightening

limits on public activities as the French government seeks to ward off a new nationwide lockdown.

The stricter restrictions announced Monday in Marseille and Bordeaux were responses to a demand from France's prime minister that both cities take additional steps to stem their growing numbers of infections, which were putting pressure on regional health services.

In Bordeaux, the top government official for the region announced a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people in public parks, along the city's picturesque river and on beaches.

Also banned are fun fairs, antique fairs and neighborhood parties. The new rules also limit the size of large public gatherings to no more than 1,000 people, below the national benchmark of 5,000 people. That limit covers places like stadiums and concert halls, as well as demonstrations.

To counter partying, Bordeaux cafes and restaurants will also no longer be able to serve clients who are standing up and will not be able to play music outdoors. Dancing is forbidden in public venues, including at weddings. Drinking alcohol in public is also banned in Bordeaux, a center of the French wine industry.



Young students, some of them wearing protective face mask as a precaution against the coronavirus, gather outside their school in Paris, Monday Sept. 14, 2020. France sees a substantial increase of Covid-19 cases. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)

The regional government also asked Bordeaux residents to limit private family gatherings, singling out weddings, to a maximum of 10 people.

The Gironde region that includes Bordeaux was largely spared France's first wave of infections that overwhelmed hospitals and led to a two-month lockdown from March. But it is now seeing a surge in positive tests, at rates above the national average, especially in the 15-44 age group.

In Marseille, France's second-biggest city after Paris, the regional government announced a series of similar restrictions and the cancellation of an 11-day international festival, as well as a growing number of localities where masks will be obligatory outdoors.

The Marseille region's top government official vowed to quickly close down bars and restaurants that don't observe an overnight curfew and that serve clients who stand up. Clients also will no longer be able to share pipes for smoking fragrant tobaccos, a popular pastime for some immigrant groups.



Police officers talk to a man while wearing protective face masks as precaution against the conoravirus at Tocadero plaza near Eiffel Tower in Paris, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. France sees a substantial increase of Covid-19 cases. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)



People wearing protective face masks as precaution against the conoravirus walk at Tocadero plaza near Eiffel Tower in Paris, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. France sees a substantial increase of Covid-19 cases. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

Student parties are banned and school trips are suspended. Shows and other events in public halls, in tents and sports arenas are being limited to 1,000 people, who must be seated and kept apart.

France is grappling with the double headache of trying revive its COVID-battered economy while also curbing a steady climb in infections, spread

during summer months when vacationers let their guard down and picked up by increased testing.

France's health agency announced Saturday that the country crossed the threshold of 10,000 new cases nationwide in 24 hours, a record.

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