

Los Angeles to consider stay-home order as virus spreads

November 24 2020, by Brian Melley and Christopher Weber



Pedestrians walk past a COVID-19-themed mural outside a boarded up business Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

Officials in the nation's largest county will discuss a possible stay-home order just days before Thanksgiving after a spike of coronavirus cases surpassed a threshold set by Los Angeles public health officials to trigger one.

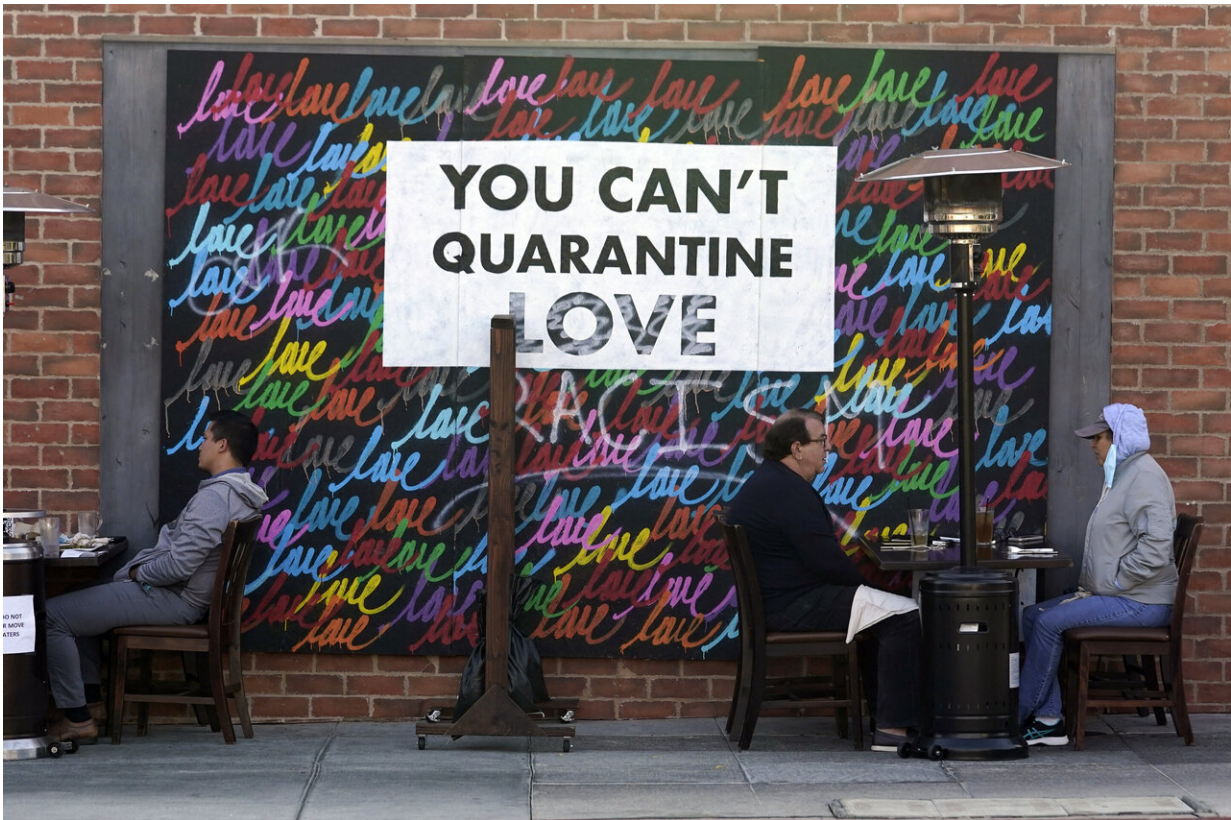
An "impressive and alarming surge" of more than 6,000 new cases put Los Angeles County over a five-day average of 4,500 cases per day, Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said Monday. She declined to take action until county supervisors meet Tuesday.

If the county orders residents to stay home, it would be the first such action since mid-March when Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom followed the lead of several counties and issued a statewide order that closed schools and severely restricted movement, except for essential workers and for people buy groceries or pick up food.

Coronavirus cases and hospitalizations have been rapidly rising across California in November. The state recorded its highest day of positive test results on Saturday with more than 15,000. It had more than 14,000 cases Sunday. Hospitalizations have increased 77% over the past two weeks.

"At this rate, our hospitals won't have any spare beds by Christmas time," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti about the situation in his city.

Medical centers are prepared to increase capacity and the city has plans to set up field hospitals if necessary, Garcetti said.



A COVID-19-themed mural reads "You Can't Quarantine Love," outside of a restaurant, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

Newsom has issued a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew for almost all state residents and urged residents to avoid nonessential travel during what is typically the busiest travel period of the year. Anyone entering California is advised to quarantine for two weeks.

If another stay-home order is issued, it could create conflict for people

planning to spend Thanksgiving together. Officials have urged people not to meet with more than two other households and to celebrate outdoors and follow physical distancing rules.

Despite the advisory, millions of Californians are expected to travel on Thanksgiving, mainly by car.

In Los Angeles, the county of 10 million residents accounts for a quarter of the state's 40 million residents but has about a third of the cases and more than a third of the deaths.

The rapid rise has taken public health officials by surprise, outpacing a troubling summer surge when average cases increased 43%.



A COVID-19-themed mural reads "You Can't Quarantine Love," outside of a restaurant, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

A week ago, Ferrer said she was hopeful the county wouldn't hit an average of 4,000 cases until early December and didn't think that it was inevitable.

But newly confirmed cases passed that threshold on Sunday, triggering an order shutting down restaurant dining for three weeks starting Wednesday at 10 p.m. and further crippling an industry that has reeled from the virus.

Restaurant owners in Los Angeles who have had to adapt to ever-changing rules were trying to reinvent their businesses again to keep afloat with only delivery and take-out.

Owners said they were upset the county took the action when it seemed that infections were more likely coming from private gatherings.

"The same people desperate to go to bars are going to party in their houses," said Brittney Valles, owner of Guerrilla Tacos in downtown Los Angeles.



Volunteers serve motorists at a food distribution center set up at SoFi Stadium ahead of Thanksgiving and amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

Business owners in some parts of the state have ignored rules requiring them to close or curtail operations. Others have challenged the orders in court.

A San Diego judge on Monday rejected a request to temporarily restore indoor service at restaurants and gyms in the state's second-most populous county that were forced to move operations outside this month to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Two restaurants and two gyms sued on behalf of their sectors to have

California's four-tier system of business restrictions declared illegal. They wanted to restore indoor operations to 25% capacity for restaurants and 10% for gyms, the levels that were set prior to the recent surge in cases.

Superior Court Judge Kenneth Medel declined, saying there was scientific evidence to support Newsom's sweeping public health orders to restrict business activity during the pandemic.



Zoey Arthurs, 9, wears a mask and gloves while volunteering at a food distribution center set up at SoFi Stadium ahead of Thanksgiving and amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)



Volunteers dance while waiting to distribute food at SoFi Stadium ahead of Thanksgiving and amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)



Volunteers load a pickup truck at a food distribution center set up at SoFi Stadium ahead of Thanksgiving and amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)



Owen Demoff, 11, volunteers at a food distribution center set up at SoFi Stadium ahead of Thanksgiving and amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)



Claire Demoff, 13, foreground, and her brother Owen, 11, volunteer at a food distribution center set up at SoFi Stadium amid the COVID-19 pandemic and ahead of Thanksgiving, Monday, Nov. 23, 2020, in Inglewood, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

The California Restaurant Association went to court Tuesday but a judge rejected a request for an order barring a shutdown until Los Angeles County health officials provide medical or scientific evidence that outdoor restaurant dining poses an unreasonable risk to public health.

The city of Pasadena, which has an independent public health department, broke with Los Angeles County and decided to allow outside dining to continue at restaurants while it assesses virus numbers.

"We need to balance our growing numbers and the economic hardship of restaurant personnel," said a statement released by spokeswoman Lisa Derderian.

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Citation: Los Angeles to consider stay-home order as virus spreads (2020, November 24)
retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-11-los-angeles-discuss-stay-home-covid.html>

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