

Reno area confirms 1st case of variant that originated in UK

March 13 2021, by Scott Sonner



In this Feb. 10, 2021, file photo, people prepare doses of a COVID-19 vaccine at the Martin Luther King Senior Center, in North Las Vegas. Nevada's top coronavirus official didn't guarantee the state can meet President Joe Biden's goal of offering a vaccination to every adult who wants a shot by May 1, but said it gives everyone something to work toward. COVID-19 Task Force chief Caleb Cage said everything depends on vaccine allocations. Seventeen new COVID-19 deaths were reported statewide Friday, March 12, 2021, bringing the pandemic total in Nevada to almost 5,100.(AP Photo/John Locher, File)

Health officials have confirmed the first northern Nevada case of a COVID-19 variant that originated in the United Kingdom, and they are trying to determine if the infection linked to a large gathering in Washoe County may have spread to others.

At least eight cases related to the variant have already been confirmed in southern Nevada. The first was in the Las Vegas area in late January.

The new case confirmed in Washoe County, which includes Reno and Sparks, involves a woman in her 30s whose infection is linked to a gathering of more than 60 people from multiple states, county health district officer Kevin Dick announced late Friday.

Seventeen additional COVID-19 cases have been linked to the same event, although not all of the people who have tested positive are from Washoe County and it's not yet known whether they are infected with the variant, Dick said.

Additional genomic sequencing is underway, but many specimens are not available for genomic sequencing, he said.

"This is a stark reminder that we are not out of the woods with COVID-19," Dick said in a statement Friday. "We suspected that this variant which originated in the UK was present in Washoe County weeks ago but it's now confirmed."

"We are recommending that people not attend large gatherings, and follow our guidance and the governor's directives because we have seen how quickly the virus can spread," he said.



In this Feb. 10, 2021, file photo, people receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the Martin Luther King Senior Center in North Las Vegas. Nevada's top coronavirus official didn't guarantee the state can meet President Joe Biden's goal of offering a vaccination to every adult who wants a shot by May 1, but said it gives everyone something to work toward. COVID-19 Task Force chief Caleb Cage said everything depends on vaccine allocations. Seventeen new COVID-19 deaths were reported statewide Friday, March 12, 2021, bringing the pandemic total in Nevada to almost 5,100. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)

The Nevada State Public Health Laboratory confirmed the new variant in Washoe County, Dick said.

Nevada's first case of another COVID-19 variant that originated in South Africa was confirmed in Washoe County in mid-February.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the variant that originated in the variant is "associated with increased transmissibility (i.e., more efficient and rapid transmission, including an increased risk of death compared to other variants)."

Seventeen new COVID-19 deaths were reported statewide Friday, bringing the total since last March to 5,097.

The number of COVID-19 cases reported by state health officials jumped by 858, to 298,623, after the Las Vegas-based Southern Nevada Health District added about 460 new cases that had been delayed in reporting. Nearly 231,000 of the cases in the state since last March, or 77%, have been in the Las Vegas area.

Nevada also passed the 575,000 mark in vaccines initiated, including almost 324,000 first and second doses delivered, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services.

Nearly 10.3% of the state's more than 3.1 million residents have been inoculated.

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