



News from the Emergency Management Committee Chair (2/26/21)

COVID-19 Related News

About 40% of California Inmates Have Received a COVID-19 Vaccine

[According to the Los Angeles Times](#), around 40% of people in custody of California's corrections system have received the COVID-19 vaccine. This figure is praised by prison advocates who claim that only a fraction of the state's vaccine is needed to protect one of the most vulnerable populations.

Administration of vaccines began on December 22, 2020 at the California Health Care Facility in Stockton, as reported by the California Correctional Health Care Services. As of February 22, 37,588 incarcerated citizens and 24,959 staff members have received their vaccination. In total, there are more than 94,000 people currently in the custody of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Statewide, 211 prisoners and 26 prison staff members have died from difficulties related to COVID-19. In settings such as a prison facility, social distancing is difficult, and the virus has many chances to enter as staff members arrive for and leave from shifts.

Los Angeles Unified Will Receive 40% of School Staff Vaccine Doses in Effort to Target Neediest Areas

[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) 40% of coronavirus vaccines available for Los Angeles County school staff will go to the Los Angeles Unified School District through a new distribution formula. This formula is designed to help reopen campuses sooner in areas hardest hit by the pandemic and student learning loss.

This 40% may seem comparatively generous, but officials claim it falls short of what they would need to reopen elementary school classrooms by the beginning of April.

Details about the distribution were presented in a news conference with county officials and the Los Angeles County Office of Education as the state prepares to allocate around 10% of available doses to the education sector beginning March 1.

Los Angeles Unified enrolls around one-third of the county's public school students aged kindergarten through 12th grade. However, student population is not all that is being considered as the district's allocation also derives from a formula that accounts for poverty and prevalence of COVID-19 in the communities it serves.

The distribution formula divides the school systems in the county into five groups, each representing around 20% of public school students. Los Angeles Unified is the second largest school district in the nation with 465,000 students, so it counts for two zones alone in the formula. Outside of equity factors, doses are allotted based on the number of school employees providing services in person.

Looking at the last metric, Los Angeles Unified does not fare well as no students will receive in-person services until March 4, when less than 1% are expected to return initially. However, the school system receives additional doses based on the 80% of their students that qualify for a free or reduced-price school lunch, a standard marker for family poverty. Additionally, the pandemic's toll in some parts of Los Angeles Unified has been among the worst in the nation.

The full article, including details on the district's target reopening date and the number of vaccines needed to meet this target date, can be found [here](#).

State of California Releases New Employer Portal to Assist with COVID-19 Compliance

[The National Law Review](#) reported that the Labor & Workforce Development Agency and the Department of Industrial Relations have consolidated resources for employers into a [new website](#). This new site has been established as the state of California reaches one year of being under various shelter-in-place orders.

The site will provide information on how to ensure a safer and healthier workplace, as well as information on handling employees who may be sick or exposed to COVID-19 in FAQ form. [The site](#) also has training resources for both employers and employees to learn more about preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Furthermore, the state's new website [includes a "road map" section](#) where employers can select their county and industry to receive information about regulations and requirements applicable to their industry. The guidance includes required safety protocols, potential employee benefits the employer may be required to comply with, and information on the steps to take following COVID-19 cases in the workplace.

California Coronavirus Strain May Be More Infectious and Lethal

[Science Magazine](#) reported that a [new strain of COVID-19](#) that was first identified in California, and now is spreading throughout the state, may be somewhat more transmissible. Additionally, the new strain may heighten patients' risk of admission to the intensive care unit (ICU) and death, according to a preprint reporting lab studies and epidemiological data.

This new variant has also been identified in other states, but its prevalence among more than 2000 samples collected in California swelled from 0% to greater than 50% from September 2020 to late January 2021, according to the University of California, San Francisco.

Senior author Charles Chiu, an infectious diseases physician and sequencing expert at UCSF explained that, "this variant is concerning because our data shows that it is more contagious, more likely to be associated with severe illness, and at least partially resistant to neutralizing antibodies." The data suggest the new strain "should likely be designated a variant of concern warranting urgent follow-up investigation," the authors write in their preprint, which has not been peer reviewed and which they say is expected to be posted online soon.

Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at Georgetown University's Center for Global Health Science and Security who was not involved in the research said that the findings, "warrant taking a much closer look at this variant." However, other coronavirus experts say more data is needed before conclusion can be fully drawn. They also noted that among patients with the variant, the study included fewer than 10 who were admitted to the ICU and fewer than 10 who died from the variant.

For UCSF's study, the authors sequenced 2172 genomes from virus samples captured from patients in 44 different counties across the state between September 1, 2020 and January 29, 2021. The new variant comes in two forms labeled B.1.427 and B.1.429 that carry slightly different mutations, accounted for 21.3% of these sequences overall. They also studied the medical records of 324 COVID-19 patients who were cared for at UCSF clinics or its medical center. The data was adjusted to account for differences in age, gender, and ethnicity, finding that in comparison with patients who had other viral strains, those carrying the variant were 4.8 times more likely to be admitted to the ICU and 11 times more likely to die from the variant.

The scientists also found data suggesting the variant is more contagious. They found that people infected with the variant harbored about two times as much virus in their noses, an index of viral shedding, which may make them more infectious to others. In the lab, viruses engineered to carry a key mutation found in the variant were better than control viruses at infecting human cells and lung-like structures called organoids. And in one nursing home where the variant took hold, it spread severalfold faster than in four other nursing home outbreaks caused by other viral variants.

In lab studies, B.1.429 also impacted the effectiveness of antibodies. Researchers found that it was four times less susceptible than the original coronavirus to neutralizing antibodies from the blood of people who recovered from COVID-19, and two times less susceptible to antibodies from the blood of people vaccinated with the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. That diminished potency is "moderate but significant," the researchers explained.

The data found based on patient records suggest the variants may be linked to worse outcomes. However, although the ICU and mortality findings reached statistical significance, the numbers were small. Eight of 61, or 13%, of hospitalized patients with the variants were admitted to the ICU, compared with seven of 244, or 2.9%, of hospitalized patients who did not harbor the variants. Seven of 62 people (or 11.3%) with the variants died, versus five of 246 (or 2%) of people without the variants.

The authors have admitted that it is not possible to tell whether or not the variant actually makes people sicker or if most of the patients with the variant were diagnosed during the worst months of the pandemic, when health care systems were overloaded. All of the variant-infected patients in the study who died at UCSF died between December 22, 2020 and January 28, 2021, in the middle of a surge of infections.

In addition to other mutations, B.1.427 and B.1.429 each have an identical trio of mutations in the coronavirus spike protein, which allows the virus to invade human cells. One of those mutations, labeled L452R, is thought to stabilize the interaction between the spike protein and the receptor it uses to attach to and invade human cells, increasing infectivity. None of those three spike mutations have been found in the three other variants of concern, which developed in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil.

UCSF Doctors Detect Shocking Increase of CA Variant Cases in Mission District Study

[ABC 7 News](#) reported that doctors in San Francisco reported an increase of California variant COVID-19 cases in the Mission District, while also pointing to an elevated transmission within households.

On December 31, 2020, University of California, San Francisco infectious disease specialist, Dr. Charles Chiu, detected the first California variant cases in the Bay Area. Close to two months later, the health care community is concerned as cases continue increasing.

Dr. Joe DeRisis, professor of biochemistry and biophysics at UCSF and co-president of Chan Zuckerberg Biohub stated that, “it’s a race between us and the variant and we don’t want to lose.” Community group Unidos en salud, the Latino Task Force, and the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub and UCSF found that the California variant was spreading over the holidays not only in the state, but locally in the Mission District.

Dr. Havlir, UCSF Professor of Medicine, explained that “comprised approximately about 16% of all the virus we were seeing people infected.” Then in January, they were surprised as it was comprising over 50% of the strains they are seeing. One of the most concerning traits of this variant is that it is spreading rapidly amongst households.

Dr. Havlir illuminated that, “the virus does not care about boundaries. It’s going to spread widely quickly so it’s much higher for these variants to pop out when there is so much virus replicated.”

State Library Announces Emergency COVID-19 Recovery Funds Brings Libraries \$1.6 Million in Chromebooks and WIFI Hotspots to Californians

[The California State Library](#) announced on Tuesday that nearly 5,000 WIFI hotspots and laptops will be provided to community libraries around the state utilizing \$1.6 million in emergency COVID-19 recovery funds, according to the Sierra Sun Times.

These laptops will help connect communities by allowing users to video chat, access banking services and health portals, as well as apply for unemployment benefits and other civic services, along with all other web browser capabilities. The hotspots provide access to a 4G LTE network that isn’t throttled and has unlimited data. These devices are going to be distributed with a priority on California’s least resourced communities.

This new effort is yet another way the State Library is working to connect Californians to the same high-speed broadband network found at the state’s public universities, colleges, and schools. Since 2014, more than 900 of the 1,128 libraries in California have been linked with the network. Funding for this initiative comes from the federal Library Services and Technology Act, which requires libraries to comply with the Children Internet Protection Act to receive devices.

California School Board Members’ Property Vandalized Over COVID-19 Restrictions

[Fox 23 News](#) reported that two members of the Twin Rivers Unified School District Board of Education had their property vandalized last week among ongoing school disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Michael Baker, Vice President of the Twin Rivers Unified School District Board of Education, was one of the two board members whose property was vandalized, his being his Jeep. Baker has

served on the board since 2012 and has two of his own children enrolled in the district. He reported that a neighbor alerted him to a window in his vehicle being broken into. He then found a note amidst the shards of glass that read, “bring kids back.”

Baker explained that while he understands parents’ frustration, the blame seems misplaced as the board is not the target. The vandals also targeted fellow board member Bob Bastian’s home on the same night, but the details of the damage are unclear.

The board plans to meet on March 3rd to solely discuss the reopening of schools.

Update on Various Emergency Response Tactics

California PD: ‘Game-Changing’ Live911 Streaming of Emergency Calls Accelerates Responses

[IWCE’s Urgent Communications reports](#) in Clovis, California, police officers are able to respond to incidents more rapidly, saving lives and property. This faster response time is all thanks to police using the Live911 application, developed HigherGround, to listen to the audio from 911 calls near their location, according to a Clovis police official.

A lieutenant at the Clovis Police Department, Jim Munro, informed IWCE’s Urgent Communications that the department began using Live911 about a year ago and now around 60% of the department’s 100 officers in the field use the technology. This technology is what Munro says to be a “game-changer for us,” because “it allows [police officers in the field] to respond quicker to these 911 calls, because they are actually hearing it – sometimes minutes before they are dispatched, because of how busy the dispatch center is.”

Live911 makes it possible for the audio from 911 calls to be livestreamed through the browser on a computing device with broadband connectivity. Clovis PD uses Panasonic Toughbook laptops and Version 4G air cards, according to Munro.

Clovis PD allows their officers to determine the proximity parameters for their Live911 use. Some officers opt to be able to access all 911 calls in the city. Others only want to be able to access 911 calls within a mile of their vehicle’s location.

Not only does this technology allow officers to arrive on scene faster, but they also can pick up a greater understanding of the situation and catch really fine details while listening to the livestream of the call. They are not listening to the actual 911 call, not the dispatcher, so they are able to hear the context of the conversation and the tone of the caller’s voice to really evaluate how to respond while responding quickly.

Some notable instances highlighting Live911’s value to the Clovis police force include multiple rapid medical responses, two encounters with gunmen that called 911 as part of suicide plans, and an incident in which police were able to interrupt a burglary attempt in progress while listening to the 911 call from the female resident in the house.

The full article with more details of Live911 being used in Clovis and in other pilot projects can be found [here](#).

Pasadena Fire Department Emergency Reserve Answers the Call of Duty

[Pasadena Now reported that members of the EMS Reserve](#) have been responding to emergencies and treating patients ever since its formation in 1981. The three-dozen or so members of the reserve come from all different types of backgrounds, ranging from Hollywood film directors, to spacecraft engineers, to lawyers, executives, and even medical students.

Pasadena Fire Department EMS Reserve Senior Lead Coordinator, Austin Smithard, explained that while these reserve members are required to have emergency medical technician training, at minimum, but are also held to the same standards as their full-time Fire Department colleagues. The reserves man the backs of ambulances and provide medical aid at major events in the city, without compensation.

Smithard was a commercial flight instructor, film director, producer, and writer with over 450 productions to his credit, before joining the reserve eight years ago. He said that leading the professional, dedicated men and women of the reserve has been a privilege and honor as the job can be demanding and stressful. He explained that those who volunteer for the team and pass the rigorous selection process possess special qualities.

All reserve members are required to serve a minimum of 16 hours per month, but many serve much more time than that. Around 40% of the team is composed of volunteers who plan to gain valuable experience and training before moving on to other careers such as doctors, flight medics, firefighters, and police officers, according to Smithard. The other 60%, he says are people with existing careers unrelated to emergency medicine.

Every team member must be a certified EMT and also undergo fire training and a probationary period. They must be knowledgeable about not only medicine and emergency response, but also response but also possess the ability to calmly respond to stressful situations with decisiveness and confidence, according to Smithard.

The EMS Reserve is equipped to assist with large events, such as the Rose Parade or Rose Bowl events. They are also ready to assist in the event of any major local catastrophe. Police reserves in the region are fairly common, but Pasadena's Fire Department Reserve is unique.

If Wildfire Ignites, High-Tech Plane Will Hit Southern California Skies

[When fighting fast-moving wildfires, information is vital](#) and until recently, data from the sky was not being relayed simultaneously. Oftentimes, an air crew flies over a blaze to capture images, then has to land, find a computer, find internet, put in a thumb drive, make their maps, and then send it to a computer.

The Orange County Resident reports that, now, a small, high-tech plane with a state-of-the-art camera and satellite sits ready at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos. The plane is poised to deliver real-time infrared video and photos to decision-makers on the ground within seconds. This information is sent directly to the firefighters' cell phones.

The Beechcraft King Air 200 is staffed around the clock. There is an identical plane sitting in Sacramento, but it is only prepared to go up for 12 hours per day. Between the two planes, they can cover the entire state. Each is capable of propelling to a fire at 260 mph.

Between October to mid-April, the state is spending around \$7.2 million to have the planes in California firefighters' arsenal. The state has the option to either extend this timeframe or take a break from the planes.

During the Bond fire in Silverado Canyon in early December, this technology was put to use. Once airborne, the flight crew used the infrared- and sensory-camera systems to create fire-perimeter, behavior maps, and other visuals and then sent them with the onboard satellite system. This data can also be livestreamed.

The software considers factors such as terrain, weather, wind, brush, trees, burn scars, structures, and estimated pockets of people. The photos show areas around the epicenter showing how many acres the fire could spread into and how many homes could be hurt. This allows firefighters to tell which homes must be evacuated. During the Bond fire, as many as 25,000 residents were told to evacuate.

The software is essential to helping firefighters make solid, informed predictions.

Funding Opportunities

2020-21 EMPG For Federally-Recognized Tribes in California RFP

[The Governor's Office of Emergency Services \(Cal OES\) has created this funding to assist federally-recognized tribes in preparing for all hazards.](#) Funds provided under this program are required to be used to support activities that effectively contribute to the tribe's capability to prevent, prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters, whether natural or man-made.

Yearly, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announce a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the EMPG Program. The program is intended to support state, local, and tribal efforts to protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from natural or man-made disasters and other catastrophic events. The funding will help to prepare the nation for the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to lives, property, and the environment in the United States.

EMPG provides funding to implement projects that enhance all-hazards preparedness and serve to build, sustain, and deliver 32 core capabilities across the five Mission Areas of the National Preparedness Goal (NPG). These Mission Areas, which are essential to the security and resilience of the nation, are Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. The building, sustainment, and delivery of these core capabilities require the combined effort of the whole community, including public, private, and tribal entities.

The deadline to apply is this **Friday, March 26, 2021, at 5:00pm**. Total estimated funding is \$197,998. The details on how to apply can be found [here](#).

Rural Fire Capacity

[The Rural Fire Capacity \(RFC\) Program](#) is a federally-funded grant program that allows California to provide local and rural fire departments with minor firefighting, training, communications and safety equipment for their volunteer firefighters.

This program is not intended for major equipment such as fire engines or vehicles, nor is it intended for Capital repairs. The program has a 50/50 match requirement, meaning that the applying department must be able to meet the intended grant award, dollar for dollar. Awards for departments are set at a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$20k.

Communications for alarm systems and dispatch capabilities, should be considered an integral part of the rural fire department. Funds are available for the development and purchase of radio equipment for dispatching centers, vehicles, alert monitors, and pagers.

Funding requests for construction projects or HAZMAT, extrication, rescue, medical aid, and other non-fire training costs or materials are all NOT fundable.

To be eligible for funding, departments must meet at least one of the following qualifications:

1. A single fire department serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less.
2. Area fire departments (fire districts, townships, etc.) may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 as long as the service area of the fire department includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The RFC funding must be used to benefit the rural population.
3. A single county or town with a population over 10,000 which is served by two or more fire districts operating entirely within the bounds of the county or town may qualify as long as the service area of a given fire department includes a rural area or a rural community or the population of the fire department's jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. The RFC funding must be used for the rural area.
4. A single community with a population greater than 10,000 and having a single fire department with one or more fire stations may qualify. The fire department must have a service area that includes a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 population. Also, a single community with a population greater than 10,000 which also provides fire protection to an adjoining rural community of 10,000 or less population by contract may also be eligible provided the RFC funding is used entirely to support the rural community.

A single community fire department serving a population greater than 10,000 and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community is not eligible for RFC financial assistance.

This funding is provided by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The deadline to apply is **May 4, 2021 at 11:59pm**. The details of how to apply can be found [here](#).

The Department of Homeland Security Announces Funding Opportunity for \$1.87 Billion in Preparedness Grant

Secretary of the Department Homeland Security, Alejandro N. Mayorkas, announced Thursday the release of the funding notice for eight different types of preparedness grants worth nearly \$1.87 billion. These programs, combined, will provide more than \$1.8 billion in critical funding to assist our state and local partners in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other disasters.

Secretary Mayorkas full statement can be viewed [here](#).

The following grants are non-competitive and awarded to recipients based on a number of factors:

1. State Homeland Security Program—provides \$415 million to support the implementation of risk-driven, capabilities-based state homeland security strategies to address capability

targets. Awards are based on statutory minimums and relative risk as determined by DHS/FEMA's risk methodology.

2. Urban Area Security Initiative—provides \$615 million to enhance regional preparedness and capabilities in 31 high-threat, high-density areas. Awards are based on relative risk as determined by DHS/FEMA's risk methodology.
 - a. For both the state homeland and urban area grants, 30% of the awards must address the five priority areas of cybersecurity, soft target and crowded places, information and intelligence sharing, domestic violent extremism, and emerging threats. Additionally, 25% of these grants must be dedicated to law enforcement terrorism prevention activities, and 80% of these grants must be obligated from the state to local or tribal governments within 45 days of receipt.
3. Emergency Management Performance Grant—provides more than \$355 million to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial governments in enhancing and sustaining all-hazards emergency management capabilities. Relative population is considered.
4. Intercity Passenger Rail—provides \$10 million to Amtrak to protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and increase the resilience of the Amtrak rail system. Award made per congressional direction.

The following grants are competitive, and exact awards will be announced later this year:

5. Operation Stonegarden—provides \$90 million to enhance cooperation and coordination among state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal law enforcement agencies to jointly enhance security along the United States land and water borders.
6. Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program —provides \$15 million to eligible tribal nations to implement preparedness initiatives to help strengthen the nation against risk associated with potential terrorist attacks and other hazards.
7. Nonprofit Security Grant Program—provides \$180 million to support target hardening and other physical security enhancements for nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack. This year, \$90 million is provided to nonprofits in UASI-designated urban areas, and \$90 million is provided to nonprofits outside of UASI-designated urban areas located in any state or territory.
8. Port Security Grant Program—provides \$100 million to help protect critical port infrastructure from terrorism, enhance maritime domain awareness, improve port-wide maritime security risk management, and maintain or re-establish maritime security mitigation protocols that support port recovery and resiliency capabilities.
9. Transit Security Grant Program —provides \$88 million to owners and operators of public transit systems to protect critical surface transportation and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and to increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.
10. Intercity Bus Security Grant Program —provides \$2 million to owners and operators of intercity bus systems to protect surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and to increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.

All preparedness funding notices can be found [here](#). Final submissions must be made through the non-disaster grants system located [here](#).

Further information on the DHS's preparedness grant program can be found on their [website](#) and on [FEMA's website](#).

Alejandro Majorkas: How My DHS Will Combat Domestic Extremism

Alejandro Majorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, and the rest of the department have been working with its many partners at the local, state, and federal levels to take immediate action in addressing the domestic violent extremism that poses as a threat to our country. The United States has been suffering an upsurge in domestic violent extremism for years and the attack on the nation's capitol on January 6 was a ruthless example of this suffering.

On Thursday, DHS issued more than \$1 billion in homeland security grants to eligible state, local, territorial and tribal partners, as they do each year. These grants are a critical tool to protect the homeland from the most urgent threats. As a department, they say they recognize that we must adapt our grant-making to account for the evolving threat environment.

That is why Majorkas has designated domestic violent extremism as a National Priority Area for the first time and will require state and local governments to spend 7.5 percent of their DHS grant awards combating this threat. In practice, this means state and local governments nationwide will spend at least \$77 million to prevent, prepare for, protect against and respond to domestic violent extremism. Well-established grant guidance clarifies eligible expenses for building these important capabilities. It also ensures the funds are spent in ways that demonstrably contribute to identifiable security needs while upholding our nation's values.

The full opinion piece written by Majorkas can be found [here](#).