



COVID-19 UPDATE December 14, 2020

Global

Total cases – 72,778,813

Total deaths – 1,619,399

United States

Total cases – 16,508,067

Total deaths – 300,382

The Food and Drug Administration issued emergency-use authorization for Pfizer-BioNTech’s coronavirus vaccine candidate as the COVID-19 death toll in the United States nears 300,000. On December 10, 19 states set weekly case records, and California became the first state to add more than 30,000 cases in a single day. Over the past week, the U.S. has averaged 210,112 cases per day, an increase of 30 percent from the average two weeks ago.

Trump Administration

- **White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows** warned Friday that Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn risks losing his job if the agency does not approve Pfizer’s coronavirus vaccine.
- The New York Times reported Sunday evening that **President Trump** and other top officials would receive the newly approved coronavirus vaccine within the next several days. Hours later, President Trump [tweeted](#) that White House staff will receive the vaccine “somewhat later in the program, unless specifically necessary.”
- **HHS Sec. Alex Azar** told Fox Business that he thinks U.S. is on track to get enough vaccines for give every American a Covid shot.
 - “We’ll use whatever powers we need,” he adds and says U.S. has the **Defense Production Act** if needed to put U.S. at the “front of the line” and get additional supplies
- On Thursday, the **Government Accountability Office** published a [study](#) finding that the Treasury Department’s delay in reviewing and approving federal airline loan applications from smaller air carriers limited the help they received and may have led those companies to lay off workers or cease operations. Congress directed Treasury to administer \$25 billion in air carrier loans to passenger airlines in March under the CARES Act, but the Department did not begin sharing loan agreements with small carriers until August.
- The **White House coronavirus task force** recommended to President Donald Trump that the U.S. start allowing in travelers from Brazil, the U.K. and 27 other EU countries, CNBC [reports](#).
 - Under recommendation, travel restrictions on travelers from China and Iran wouldn’t be relaxed
 - Task force was not unanimous in recommendation

- Task force agreed that local authorities would be in charge of testing and quarantine protocols of international travelers
- Policy wouldn't guarantee U.S. travelers entry to those same countries

Biden Presidential Transition

- On Tuesday, **President-elect Joe Biden** laid out his [plan](#) to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Biden's plan has three central tenets: 1) 100 days of mask wearing, 2) 100 million vaccinations in 100 days, and 3) Reopening the majority of schools within his first 100 days.
- **Michael Osterholm**, a member of President-elect Joe Biden's coronavirus advisory board, criticized the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [recommendations](#) on how to decrease the risk of spreading COVID-19 during the December holiday season. He told CNN that the CDC is "basically saying, 'Don't get together, but if you are going to get together, do these things.' That's like telling somebody, 'Don't drive drunk, but if you are going to drive drunk, these are the best ways to do it.'"

Congress

- **A bipartisan group of lawmakers** delivered details of their proposed \$908 billion pandemic-relief package, splitting it into two parts in recognition of deep differences over state aid and a liability shield for employers.
 - Now it will be up to Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress to find a way to get one or both parts of the plan through the House and Senate before the last of the economic relief provisions from an earlier stimulus expire at the end of the year.
 - The **senators** who worked to negotiate a compromise over the past two weeks are proposing a \$748 billion relief plan that includes nearly \$300 billion in help for small business, \$300-per-week in enhanced unemployment benefits and aid for vaccine distribution.
 - Their second bill only contains two elements: \$160 billion in state aid sought by Democrats and the liability provisions that Republicans have said should be part of an aid package.
 - **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi** offered a pause in liability lawsuits in exchange for the \$160 billion in state and local aid proposed by a bipartisan group of lawmakers. A pause would allow states to write liability laws in 2021.
- **Sens. Bernie Sanders** (I-Vt.) and **Josh Hawley** (R-Mo.) offered an [amendment](#) yesterday to the one-week continuing resolution (H.R. 8900) that would provide a second round of \$1,200 payments for adults and \$500 for children. The pair could force a shutdown if either opposes taking a quick vote on the stopgap due to Senate rules that require unanimous consent to avoid a lengthy debate that would run past the deadline

Vaccines and Treatment

- On Monday morning, the first doses of the **Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19** vaccine were administered in the United States.
 - **A Food and Drug Administration** advisory panel voted 17 to 4 on Thursday that the benefits of the vaccine candidate produced by Pfizer and BioNTech outweigh the risks.
 - On Friday, the **FDA** authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for emergency use.

- **Centers for Disease Control and Development Director Robert Redfield** announced Sunday that he signed an advisory panel's recommendation to approve the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in people 16 and older.
- The U.S. government ordered an additional 100 million doses of **Moderna's** vaccine candidate. If the FDA authorizes the vaccine for emergency use, it will begin shipping immediately and Americans will be vaccinated at no cost.
- On Saturday, the **Federal Aviation Administration** approved U.S. airline cockpit crews and other licensed pilots to receive the newly approved coronavirus vaccine.
- **Head of Operation Warp Speed Moncef Slaoui** told Fox News Sunday that as many as 8 in 10 Americans could receive vaccines by June. At that point, Slaoui said, the U.S. population will have established herd immunity. He also expressed concern that people are hesitant to be vaccinated.
- The **United States Postal Service** released a [statement](#) Saturday announcing that UPS will support distribution efforts for Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine as part of Operation Warp Speed. Vaccine doses will be transported from storage sites in Michigan and Wisconsin to UPS facilities in Louisville, then shipped overnight to destinations including hospitals and clinics.
- An **FDA advisory panel** will meet Thursday to evaluate **Moderna's** vaccine. Centers for Disease Control and Development advisers will meet the following day to discuss vaccine distribution.
- 30,000 doses of the **Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine** arrived in **Canada** Sunday. Elderly residents of long-term care facilities and healthcare workers are set to receive the first injections beginning. Less than half of the available 6.4 million doses of Pfizer Inc.'s Covid-19 vaccine will be initially sent out to states, and 500,000 will be held separately in reserve by the government.
- **Gustave Perna**, the army general who serves as Warp Speed's chief operating officer, said on a call with reporters Wednesday that the U.S. plans to distribute 2.9 million doses in the first round of shipments following authorization of Pfizer's still-experimental vaccine. The rest will be held back to be distributed to states and other jurisdictions when the first people vaccinated are due for their second dose 21 days later.
 - The half a million shots in reserve will be ready for unforeseen circumstances, Perna said, calling the move "good army general officer planning."
- **Puerto Rico** will begin receiving COVID-19 vaccines next week. The territory will receive approximately 205,000 doses by the end of December, with the first vaccines going to medical professionals and nursing homes, followed by first responders, public school employees, and essential workers. However, the general population may not be vaccinated until the summer.
- **Chicago** is expecting to get thousands of coronavirus vaccine doses this month and is aiming to offer the vaccine free of charge to all adult residents in 2021, city officials said Wednesday.

Other

- New restrictions took effect in **Baltimore** on Friday following a directive from Mayor Brandon Scott prohibiting all indoor and outdoor dining in the city.
- On Friday, **Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf** suspended indoor dining and limited gatherings to ten people. The measures took effect Saturday and will remain in place until January 4.
- **Ohio Governor Mike DeWine** announced that the state will enforce a 10pm to 5am curfew until January 2 to limit social gatherings.
- **Virginia** residents will be required to stay at home from midnight to 5am, with exemptions for grocery shopping, work travel, and medical emergencies. The "modified stay-at-home order" will be in effect from Monday through January 31. Governor Ralph Northam also reduced the social gathering limit to 10 and will step up enforcement of a statewide mask mandate.

- On Saturday, **Nebraska** eased several coronavirus-related restrictions. The state increased capacity limits for indoor gatherings from 25% to 50% and began allowing some elective surgeries. Groups in bars and restaurants will still be limited to eight people, but they will no longer be required to stay six feet apart. Additionally, distancing requirements were lifted for gyms, health clubs, and spas.
- **Puerto Rico** tightened its curfew, business restrictions, and social distancing measures on Monday. The new rules will be in effect through January 7.
- In a reversal of the city's reopening, **New York Governor Andrew Cuomo** shut down indoor dining in New York City on Monday.
- **New York City** plans to move as many schools as possible to five days a week of in-person lessons, Mayor Bill de Blasio said. The city has opened 878 schools in the past week. Of those, 250 will be going to five days this week. That number will grow week by week, de Blasio said Monday at a virus briefing. "You're going to be seeing a lot more," he said.
- **Australia** and **New Zealand** intend to make an arrangement allowing people to travel freely between the two countries without needing to quarantine for two weeks upon arrival.
- Officials in **South Korea** have ordered all schools to move classes online until the end of the year.
- **London** will be [placed](#) under England's toughest coronavirus restrictions from Wednesday, a person familiar with the matter said. Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who is briefing lawmakers in a call, says hospitalization and infection rates in London underlined the need for harsher measures. Under Tier 3 rules, pubs, restaurants, bars and indoor entertainment venues must close. Schools and shops can remain open
- The **Dutch** government is expected to set out plans on Monday to close non-essential stores from midnight until Jan. 19 after a jump in daily cases, public broadcaster NOS reported.
 - Museums and theaters are among sites that will also have to shutter, while schools have to close from Wednesday and switch to online classes, NOS said. Prime Minister Mark Rutte will address the nation this evening for the second time during the pandemic. The steps come on top of October's curbs, which included bar and restaurant closures.
- The **Czech Republic** [reintroduced](#) measures to combat a surge in coronavirus cases, reversing a decision two weeks ago to relax restrictions as neighbor Germany imposed a hard holiday lockdown.
 - The government shut hotels and restaurants, prolonged Christmas school holidays and imposed an 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew, according to Health Minister Jan Blatny. Shops and services will remain open. The cabinet approved an additional 10 billion-koruna (\$460 million) aid package to cover rent and wages of the affected businesses for three months.

