

Renegade Roundup



COVID-19 update

November 22, 2020

For more information on happenings at BC, check out my blog post <https://sonyachristianblog.com/>.

Good evening, Renegades!

With the next wave of the epidemic hitting us, I thought I would dedicate this Roundup to a COVID-19 update.

Kern County returned to the purple tier this week, and [Governor Gavin Newsom issued a curfew for 94 percent of Californians](#) during the holiday season to help stop the spread of the virus. Cases in California are now increasing at the same rate they were during the state's peak in July, while cases nationwide are increasing at twice the rate of the July surge.

Fortunately, even with the increase of cases in Kern County, there are still hundreds of hospital beds available, but hospitalizations tend to trail three weeks behind surges, according to county public health director Matt Constantine. For more information about Kern County's reaction to moving back into purple, [read Sam Morgen's article in Friday's Bakersfield Californian](#).

As we're now in our third wave of the virus since March, I thought it would be a good idea to address the topics of testing, tracing, and vaccinations. The first two waves were primarily in the coastal areas of the United States, and states that weren't as affected could provide resources to states like California and New York that were struggling. This third wave is different in that it is pervasive across the entire country, so resources will be spread extremely thin over the course of this holiday season and beyond.

Testing

On Tuesday, the day that Kern County returned to the purple tier, [the Board of Supervisors approved an initiative to give a \\$25 Visa gift card](#) to residents who get tested for COVID-19 at select sites designated by Kern County Public Health, which put together [a dashboard highlighting all of the testing sites in the county](#).

In a press release on Friday, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced [a \\$45 million grant to expand testing for underserved groups](#) across the country who are suffering from the disease, including African American and Latinx populations, pregnant women, and residents living on First Nations reservations.

[A new study published by the University of Colorado at Boulder](#) concluded that inexpensive tests with a quicker turnaround are more effective for preventing the spread of COVID-19, than the more accurate but time-consuming tests like the so-called “gold standard” swab up the nose examination. Researchers say increased availability of this kind of rapid testing, such as saliva tests, could create an environment of “personalized stay-at-home orders” where people would be able to test themselves from home and self-quarantine without needing to shut down churches, restaurants and offices.

Contact Tracing

[Contact tracing locally indicates that the virus is spreading primarily through small family gatherings.](#) The county’s contact tracers speak to hundreds of people every day and have discovered that “the common source of exposure is households,” according to Matt Constantine.

“Contact tracing shows no evidence that restaurants, gyms, churches or schools are contributing to significant spread in our community,” Kern County Administrative Director Ryan Alsop said.

In the summer, [BC launched a one-week contact tracing course](#) to train “coronavirus detectives” for Kern County Public Health, businesses looking to contact trace their employees, or individuals in the health sciences. The 18-hour course gives important information about COVID and other infectious diseases and gives students the tools they need to contact trace for an organization or for their families.

Across the state and nationwide, the exponential surge in cases is perplexing contact tracers and exhausting our tracing infrastructure as states can’t hire enough tracers to keep up with the demand while cases continue to rise.

In Los Angeles, cases have exploded in November after reaching a new low in October, even though the same strict measures have been in place the entire time and never changed. Contact tracers in the area indicate that there have been no significant changes in behavior from the majority Angelinos during that same time, especially since there hasn’t been any relaxation of the rules. [In an article from Friday’s LA Times](#), officials struggled to come up with an explanation for the surge, hypothesizing that clusters of cases could be linked to championship celebrations for the Dodgers and Lakers.

In states like [Washington](#), [Colorado](#), and [Michigan](#), contact tracing resources are being exhausted as officials can’t hire enough tracers to meet the demand of the surge. They’re hoping a wave of new contact tracing apps and features on iOS and Android phones will paint a better picture of how the virus is spreading. [According to an article from Reuters](#),

tracing apps use Bluetooth to track when people are in close contact with each other and will notify users anonymously when one of their contacts tests positive. Apple and Google are also rolling out a system called Exposure Notifications Express that allows public health officials to disseminate advisories more efficiently.

Vaccine

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and upstart biotech firm Moderna are racing to bring a COVID-19 vaccine to the public. [Their research and advances were featured in Saturday's cover story for the New York Times](#), as both companies appear to have simultaneously developed a vaccine that is testing with about 95 percent efficacy.

On Friday, [Pfizer and BioNTech submitted an application to authorize emergency use](#) of a COVID-19 vaccine with the US Food and Drug Administration. [An article in Sunday's USA Today](#) estimates that December 13 is the earliest possible date that a vaccine might be administered, though the following week would be more likely following an independent review by the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee.

Over the weekend, a faculty member sent me a [Washington Post op-ed from Dr. Michael Saag](#), an associate dean of global health at University of Alabama in Birmingham. Dr. Saag estimates that it will take at least 10 months after a vaccine is approved to reach 60 to 70 percent of the population, which is the immunization threshold necessary to reduce the susceptibility of infection. Social distancing measures will be necessary until we reach that point and may continue to be essential going forward.

Blueprint For a Safer Economy Dashboard

[The State of California's Blueprint For a Safer Economy dashboard](#) has been modified to fit the new guidelines announced in August. In November, we started including the health equity quartile in our report, which measures positivity rates in each county's most disadvantaged census tracts. A table with the comparison of test positivity rates from several counties on the monitoring list is below.

| | November 15, 2020* | | | November 22, 2020* | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| | New cases per 100k | Test positivity rate | Health Equity Quartile | New cases per 100k | Test positivity rate | Health Equity Quartile |
| California | 8.4 | 3.4% | N/A | 16.5 | 5.2 | N/A |
| Kern County | 8.0 | 5.2% | 6.8% | 16.1** | 8.0%** | 6.8%** |
| Kings County | 10.2 | 3.2% | 3.0% | 15.7 | 4.6% | 4.0% |
| Fresno County | 7.9 | 5.5% | 8.3% | 13.9 | 7.0% | 8.3% |
| San Bernardino | 17.2 | 7.7% | 9.3% | 27.6 | 10.5% | 9.3% |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| LA County | 11.5 | 3.8% | 6.5% | 20.6 | 5.3% | 6.5% |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

*Dashboard updated every Tuesday. Data reported on Nov. 16

**Kern County is in the purple or “widespread” tier

Johns Hopkins Dashboard:

As of 3:00 p.m. on November 22, the [Johns Hopkins University Dashboard](#) shows 12.2 million total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the US. Here is the table that captures the difference in the numbers since Nov. 15.

| | Nov. 15, 2020 | Nov. 22, 2020 | Difference | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| World | 54,299,246 | 58,521,493 | 4,222,247 | 7.8% |
| U.S. | 11,025,046 | 12,210,237 | 1,185,191 | 10.7% |
| California | 1,019,345 | 1,102,033 | 82,688 | 8.1% |
| Kern | 36,618 | 38,519 | 1,901 | 5.2% |

Stay safe, stay healthy, wear a mask, keep the 6ft distance separation, wash your hands to slow down the spread and reduce the strain on our healthcare systems and providers.

That’s all for now.
Until next time.

With much Renegade Pride and Collegiality,
sonya

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