



Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation Emergency Preparedness Update for December 22, 2020

Kentucky governor, lawmakers receive COVID-19 vaccine

(AP) — ([Press release](#)) Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear and his wife Britany received COVID-19 vaccinations on Tuesday, together with top state lawmakers. The Democratic governor thanked the top two Republican legislative leaders, Kentucky House Speaker David Osborne and Senate President Robert Stivers, for joining him in “setting the right example for the people of Kentucky.”

The head of the Kentucky national guard, lieutenant governor, and state police commissioner will receive vaccines on Wednesday, Beshear said.

Full story: <https://apnews.com/article/health-robert-stivers-coronavirus-pandemic-kentucky-152f0e02bbca96959224d071b153779d>

Related story - Fauci, other top health officials receive Moderna Covid-19 vaccine on camera

Learn more: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/fauci-other-top-health-officials-receive-moderna-vaccine-camera-n1252073>

Gov. Beshear Encourages Kentuckians to Stay Safe This Christmas

([Press release](#)) As of 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 22, Gov. Beshear reported 3,057 new cases today: 3,057, with 1,631 hospitalized. There were 419 in an ICU, with 223 on vents. The positivity reate is 8.48%; and there were 28 new deaths to report.

See all of the Kentucky Department for Public Health’s winter holiday guidance here: English [full guidance](#), [one-pager](#) and [single slide](#) and Spanish [full guidance](#), [one-pager](#) and [single slide](#).

Long Term Care Residents Get COVID-19 Vaccine

([Press release](#) - Monday) During the day Monday several long-term care facilities in the commonwealth began administering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

“Again, our goal is to get everyone in long-term care facilities vaccinated by March 1,” said Gov. Beshear. “If we do that, we cut off 66% of the deaths that we have been experiencing. We also reduce hospitalizations and we free up more health care capacity. That means patients who do come in to the hospital get more attention and access and we improve their health outcomes.”

For more information, read the [full release](#). Kentuckians can also view [images of the first long-term care residents](#) in Kentucky who were able to receive the vaccine.

Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna Test Vaccines Against New Covid-19 Variant Spreading Across U.K.

(Forbes) As dozens of countries around the world isolate the U.K. in a bid to contain a new, rapidly-spreading variant of Covid-19, leading vaccine manufacturers Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna are testing their shots against the strain and said Tuesday that they are confident their vaccines remain effective against the mutated virus although testing to confirm this may take weeks.

Learn more: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2020/12/22/pfizer-biontech-moderna-test-vaccines-against-new-covid-19-variant-spreading-across-uk/?sh=40b26fd16a34>

Related story - AstraZeneca says its vaccine should be effective against new coronavirus variant

(Reuters) British drugmaker AstraZeneca Plc told Reuters on Tuesday its COVID-19 vaccine should be effective against the new coronavirus variant, adding that studies were under way to fully probe the impact of the mutation.

“AZD1222 (AstraZeneca’s vaccine candidate) contains the genetic material of the SARS-CoV-2 virus spike protein, and the changes to the genetic code seen in this new viral strain do not appear to change the structure of the spike protein,” an AstraZeneca representative said in an email.

Drugmakers are scrambling to test their COVID-19 vaccines against the new fast-spreading variant of the virus that is raging in Britain, the latest challenge in the breakneck race to curb the pandemic.

Read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-astrazeneca-vaccin/astrazeneca-says-its-vaccine-should-be-effective-against-new-coronavirus-variant-idUSKBN28W2GP>

US hospitals facing worrisome shortage of nurses, doctors

(AP) — With so many states seeing a flood of coronavirus patients, U.S. hospitals are again worried about finding enough medical workers to meet demand just as infections from the holiday season threaten to add to the burden on American health care.

California, which is enduring by far its worst spike in cases and hospitalizations, is reaching out to places like Australia and Taiwan to fill the need for 3,000 temporary medical workers, particularly nurses trained in critical care. Hospitals in some states have enlisted retired nurses and students. In Alabama, more than 120 students and faculty members from the University of Alabama at Birmingham's nursing school began helping with care last week at UAB Hospital.

Full story: <https://apnews.com/article/san-francisco-los-angeles-california-coronavirus-pandemic-san-bernardino-0bf115c5add44bf866cc88578caf1fe>

US deaths in 2020 top 3 million, by far most ever counted

Read more: <https://apnews.com/article/us-coronavirus-deaths-top-3-million-e2bc856b6ec45563b84ee2e87ae8d5e7>

Johns Hopkins: Health Security Headlines Extracts from December 22, 2020

Readmission and Death After Initial Hospital Discharge Among Patients With COVID-19 in a Large Multihospital System (*JAMA*) In this national cohort of VA patients, 27% of survivors of COVID-19 hospitalization were readmitted or died by 60 days after discharge, and this rate was lower than matched survivors of pneumonia or heart failure.

The Looming Questions Scientists Need to Answer About the New Variant of the Coronavirus (*STAT News*) A variant of the coronavirus that emerged in the United Kingdom has forced London to shut down, led some countries to ban travel to and from the U.K., and set off a global manhunt to find out where else this version has arrived.

Suspicious Grow That Nanoparticles in Pfizer's COVID-19 Vaccine Trigger Rare Allergic Reactions (*Science*) Severe allergy-like reactions in at least *eight* people who received the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNTech over the past 2 weeks may be due to a compound in the packaging of the messenger RNA (mRNA) that forms the vaccine's main ingredient, scientists say. A similar mRNA vaccine developed by Moderna, which was authorized for emergency use in the United States on Friday, also contains the compound, polyethylene glycol (PEG).

PEG has never been used before in an approved vaccine, but it is found in many drugs that have occasionally triggered anaphylaxis—a potentially life-threatening reaction that can cause rashes, a plummeting blood pressure, shortness of breath, and a fast heartbeat. Some allergists and immunologists believe a small number of people previously exposed to PEG may have high levels of antibodies against PEG, putting them at risk of an anaphylactic reaction to the vaccine. Scientists who believe PEG may be the culprit stress that vaccination should continue.

The two vaccines both contain mRNA wrapped in lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) that help carry it to human cells but also act as an adjuvant, a vaccine ingredient that bolsters the immune response. The LNPs are “PEGylated”—chemically attached to PEG molecules that cover the outside of the particles and increase their stability and life span.

Rare vaccine injury claims steered to obscure federal office

(AP) Though most people who protect themselves with a coronavirus vaccine will never develop serious side effects, such rare cases are barred from federal court and instead steered to an obscure program with a record of seldom paying claims.

The Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program, which was set up specifically to deal with vaccines under emergency authorization, has just four employees and few hallmarks of an ordinary court. Decisions are made in secret by government officials, claimants can't appeal to a judge and payments in most death cases are capped at \$370,376.

That stands in contrast to the much more established federal vaccine court, which decides cases of injury from most childhood vaccines and other common inoculations.

Read more: <https://apnews.com/article/us-news-coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-8baa26690da5ec1136b9bd1e997a00e4>

Feds sue Walmart over role in opioid crisis

(AP) — The Justice Department sued Walmart on Tuesday, accusing it of fueling the nation's opioid crisis by pressuring its pharmacies to fill even potentially suspicious prescriptions for the powerful painkillers.

The civil complaint filed points to the role Walmart's pharmacies may have played in the crisis by filling opioid prescriptions and Walmart's own responsibility for the allegedly illegal distribution of controlled substances to the pharmacies at the height of the opioid crisis. Walmart operates more than 5,000 pharmacies in its stores around the country.

The Justice Department alleges Walmart violated federal law by selling thousands of prescriptions for controlled substances that its pharmacists "knew were invalid," said Jeffrey Clark, the acting assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's civil division.

Full story: <https://apnews.com/article/health-lawsuits-opioids-9a21000256f9cde4c666bb552547349e>

Brent Spence Bridge reopens ahead of schedule, under budget

(WDRB) The final inspection was completed Monday evening, paving the way for the gradual reopening of the bridge and the travel lanes and ramps that support access to it.

"It's been 41 days since the fire on the bridge itself, and in that time this work has been accomplished," Kentucky Secretary of Transportation Jim Gray said Tuesday. "It's been accomplished quickly but it's been accomplished safely."

Officials with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet said good weather allowed the repairs to be completed earlier than expected. The project also cost less than expected -- as little as half of the projected \$12 million price tag. The contract was awarded to Kokosing Construction Co., of Westerville, Ohio

Link to this article: https://www.wdrb.com/news/brent-spence-bridge-reopens-ahead-of-schedule-under-budget/article_ce8e95e8-447f-11eb-8774-f70e1f057980.html

Is Plastic Recycling A Lie?

Oil Companies Touted Recycling To Sell More Plastic

NPR and [PBS Frontline](#) spent months digging into internal industry documents and interviewing top former officials. We found that the industry sold the public on an idea it knew wouldn't work — that the majority of plastic could be, and would be, recycled — all while making billions of dollars selling the world new plastic.

The industry's awareness that recycling wouldn't keep plastic out of landfills and the environment dates to the program's earliest days, we found. "There is serious doubt that [recycling plastic] can ever be made viable on an economic basis," one industry insider wrote in a 1974 speech.

Yet the industry spent millions telling people to recycle, because, as one former top industry insider told NPR, selling recycling sold plastic, even if it wasn't true.

Here's the basic problem: All used plastic can be turned into new things, but picking it up, sorting it out and melting it down is expensive. Plastic also degrades each time it is reused, meaning it can't be reused more than once or twice.

On the other hand, new plastic is cheap. It's made from oil and gas, and it's almost always less expensive and of better quality to just start fresh.

All of these problems have existed for decades, no matter what new recycling technology or expensive machinery has been developed. In all that time, less than [10 percent of plastic](#) has ever been recycled. But the public has known little about these difficulties.

It could be because that's not what they were told.

Podcast and full story: <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/11/897692090/how-big-oil-misled-the-public-into-believing-plastic-would-be-recycled>

The KHEREF Emergency Preparedness Update is assembled several times a week. When events make it necessary, the Update may be sent out several times a day to keep our hospital and the healthcare community advised on preparedness news and information. Most of this information is compiled from open sources, and where possible reference links will be provided. There is an archive of [Emergency Preparedness Updates available here](#). If you would like to be added or deleted, or have something you would like to contribute to a future edition of the Emergency Preparedness Update, please contact Preparedness@kyha.com (include your current email address). The preparedness program for the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) and KHEREF are supported by US DHHS ASPR HPP funds through a contract with Kentucky Public Health.