



Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation Emergency Preparedness Update for September 16, 2021

KY has 4,891 new COVID-19 cases; Positivity rate drops

(WLEX) On Thursday, 4,891 new cases of COVID-19 were reported. The COVID positivity rate continues to decline, with 13.00% Thursday. This decline marks the eighth day in a row the rate has dropped. 2,453 people were hospitalized, 667 intensive care admittances, and 448 on ventilators. Sixty-two deaths were reported, this is the third-highest report on record.

KY Daily Report: <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/COVID19DailyReport.pdf>

Governor's press release: [*Kentucky Doctor on COVID-19: 'It's Hard to Tell a 40-Year-Old They're Going to be Dead Within 24 Hours and There's Nothing We Can Do'*](#)

Related stories on healthcare care facilities and services struggles

Some Louisville healthcare workers receive letters of termination, lose jobs for not getting vaccinated

(WAVE) The deadline for all staff to get vaccinated in two of Louisville's healthcare systems has passed, and those who chose not to get it are out of a job, or were told they'll be fired. UofL Health announced the vaccine requirement in May. Employees had until Sept. 15 to receive the first dose. According to a statement from a UofL Health spokesperson, all staff are currently either fully vaccinated, have started the process, or have received a medical or religious exemption.

"UofL Health extends its gratitude to our 12,000+ health care heroes for their collective and individual support of COVID-19 vaccine," a statement said. It goes on to say, "Today, to our knowledge, throughout our entire system, less than five team members chose to separate their employment from UofL Health due to the vaccine requirement. We respect their choice and extend appreciation for their service."

Norton Healthcare announced its vaccine requirement in August, and set a deadline for all staff to receive their first shot by Sept. 15. More than 99 percent of its employees are vaccinated, according to a statement sent to WAVE 3 News. Employees who did not comply were sent letters of termination effective Oct. 1 if they do not receive the vaccine before then.

Seventy percent of Baptist Health employees already had received the vaccine when the healthcare system announced its mandate in August. It has not checked the numbers since then.

From a statement from Baptist Health to WAVE, *"Some 70 percent of Baptist Health's current workforce was already vaccinated when the requirement was announced on Aug. 5. We know that many more employees have been vaccinated, but new numbers are not yet available.*

We are hopeful that the FDA's full approval of the Pfizer vaccine as meeting high standards for safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality does persuade our remaining staff – and members of the public – to be vaccinated."

Central Kentucky hospitals deal with worker vaccine requirements

(WLEX) St. Claire HealthCare in Morehead, [announced Wednesday](#) that 100% of their employees were compliant with the COVID-19 vaccination policy.

"If the events of that last few months have taught us anything, it is that the unvaccinated are extremely vulnerable to this virus," said Donald H. Lloyd, II, St. Claire HealthCare President and CEO. "We believe requiring COVID-19 vaccination of all staff is the moral and ethical act necessary to assure the safety of our patients and our workforce."

At University of Kentucky HealthCare, where employees were supposed to have started their complete vaccination by Tuesday, no employees had been fired because of the vaccine mandate as of Wednesday, spokeswoman Kristi Willett said.

Those without the approved exemption who haven't been vaccinated are also required to be regularly tested, but they will also face "progressive disciplinary action." If unvaccinated employees do not comply with regular testing requirements, the final disciplinary measure could be termination, Willett said. The majority of UK Healthcare's nearly 15,000 workers had been vaccinated as of Wednesday

At Baptist Health Lexington, employees have until Sept. 15 to get their first shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna two-shot vaccine, spokeswoman Ruth Ann Childers said. Employees must be fully vaccinated by Oct. 31. The single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine also counts toward the requirement.

Bowling Green Medical Center required vaccines for their employees before the federal requirement was in place. On Sept. 3, [the hospital announced](#) that they'd fired 180 employees because of the requirement, but they'd hired 178 new employees who were vaccinated.

French Health Care Workers Suspended For Not Getting A COVID-19 Shot

Read more: <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/09/16/1037895102/france-covid-19-vaccine-health-care-workers-suspended>

Barren River area hospital experiences longer E.R. wait times amid influx of COVID patients

([WBKO](#)) Kentucky hospitals are facing staffing shortages amid an increase in COVID-19 patients being admitted. As healthcare workers are spending more time caring for these COVID-19 patients, it is inevitably taking their time away from some non-COVID-19 related cases.

T.J. Samson Community Hospital is currently taking care of the most COVID-19 patients they ever have since the pandemic started. "Today (Wednesday), I believe we have 48 COVID patients. It seems like we hit a new record or at least hit, you know, our top number every day," Stacey Biggs with T.J. Samson Hospital said. "We're just not seeing any decrease at this point."

The hospital has maxed out its previous COVID-19 unit, forcing staff to create new spaces to care for the influx in patients. Some are having to wait for an open room in the emergency department. Biggs encourages the public to not show up to the emergency room simply for a COVID-19 test, but do not be afraid to come if you have shortness of breath or other serious symptoms related to COVID-19. Of the 48 COVID-19 patients, at least 40 are unvaccinated.

Western KY hospitals overwhelmed by patients seeking care in non-life-threatening situation

([WPSD](#)) Local hospitals are reporting an overwhelming increase in patients going to their emergency rooms. Baptist Health Paducah, Marshall County Hospital and Mercy Health – Lourdes Hospital all say they're struggling. People are going to the emergency room with non-life-threatening injuries and conditions, specifically those experiencing mild COVID-19 symptoms. That increases wait times in the ER, which has a direct impact on how quickly people can be treated. It also impacts the staff.

Read more: https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/news/local-hospitals-overwhelmed-by-patients-seeking-care-in-non-life-threatening-situations/article_46dc7b18-1672-11ec-8a3b-4f5a30ffebf7.html

Hospitals in Western US struggle to find beds for critically ill amid Covid surge

([WPSD](#)) Idaho hospitals are so overwhelmed with the surge in coronavirus cases that doctors and nurses have to contact dozens of regional hospitals across the West in hopes of finding places to transfer individual critical patients.

"It's just nonstop trying to find placement for these patients and the care that they need," said Brian Whitlock, the president and CEO of the Idaho Hospital Association, who noted that hospitals across the state are struggling with the same issue.

The easiest access to medical treatment might be across a border, rather than within a state's boundaries. Those state boundaries, however, have become a bit starker as hospitals struggle to keep beds open for patients within their own state.

Health leaders in Washington state said that they are attempting to help their neighbors states, but they are keeping a close eye on their own bed space. "We've had to initiate patient placement committees with physicians at our various hospitals to really assess and prioritize — in conversation with these facilities that are wanting to transfer — to really identify who's at the most risk for higher level of care and what can be managed where they're at and what cannot be managed where they're at," said Peg Currie, the chief operating officer at Providence Health Care in Spokane, Washington.

Alaska's Largest Hospital Says The Strain Of COVID Is Forcing It To Ration Care

Read more: <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/16/1037765050/alaskas-largest-hospital-rationing-care-amid-coronavirus-surge>

DHS warns of potential for violence surrounding the 'Justice for J6' rally in intelligence brief

(CNN) The Department of Homeland Security warned Thursday about the potential for violence from people involved in or opposed to the "[Justice for J6](#)" rally planned for Saturday, according to an unclassified intelligence briefing that was shared with state and local authorities and obtained by CNN. The memo also warned of potential violence on the day before the rally.

The intelligence warning is part of an information-sharing effort due to the anticipated participation of individuals coming to the nation's capital, as well as the fact that the same organizer has planned similar rallies in 15 other states over the next month.

DHS also warned that lone offenders and small groups of individuals can "mobilize to violence with little-to-no warning, particularly in response to confrontational encounters with perceived opponents or calls for escalation by key influencers."

Full story: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/16/politics/dhs-intelligence-brief-potential-violence/index.html>

Related story - US Capitol Police Requests National Guard Assistance If Needed During Sept. 18 Protest

[Reuters](#) (9/15, Cowan) reports the US Capitol Police on Wednesday "said it has asked the Pentagon to provide National Guard troops to help protect the Capitol on Sept. 18 during a scheduled protest if they are needed." In a statement, the department said it "has asked the Department of Defense for the ability to receive National Guard support should the need arise on September 18." A large group is expected "at the Capitol on Saturday to protest the arrests and criminal charges against some 600 people in connection with the Jan. 6 riot."

FDA strikes cautious tone ahead of vaccine booster meeting

(AP) Influential government advisers will debate Friday if there's enough proof that a booster dose of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective — the first step toward deciding which Americans need one and when. The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday posted much of the evidence its advisory panel will consider. The agency struck a decidedly neutral tone on the rationale for boosters.

The FDA is not bound to follow the advice of its independent advisory panel. But if the agency overrules its own experts, that could stoke public confusion. Earlier this week, two top FDA vaccine regulators joined a group of international scientists in [rejecting boosters](#) now for otherwise healthy individuals, citing the strong continuing protection against severe disease.

Read full AP story for more: <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-e871c33dd713b5a6ce9f485732daab09>

Related story - Local health departments across country planning for potential Covid-19 booster rollouts

Full CNN story: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/16/health/covid-19-booster-plans-local-health-departments-wellness/index.html>

Upcoming COVID-19 vaccination and testing requirements for EMS agencies

([The InfoGram](#)) On September 9, the White House issued its [Path Out of the Pandemic](#) COVID-19 Action Plan. On the same day, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), also [announced](#) changes to emergency regulations impacting vaccination requirements. Several provisions in these new legislative changes will impact emergency medical services (EMS) and ambulance agencies.

CMS' requirements for vaccinations for nursing home workers will be expanded to include hospitals, dialysis facilities, ambulatory surgical settings, and home health agencies, among others, as a condition for participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The decision was based on the continued and growing spread of the virus in health care settings, especially in parts of the U.S. with higher incidence of COVID-19. CMS is developing an Interim Final Rule with Comment Period that will be issued in October. These changes will essentially require EMS agencies that participate in federal health care programs like Medicare and Medicaid to mandate vaccination for all staff, with limited exceptions.

In addition, the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is developing a rule that will require all employers with 100 or more employees to "ensure their workforce is fully vaccinated or require any workers who remain unvaccinated to produce a negative test result on at least a weekly basis before coming to work." OSHA will likely issue an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) soon to implement this requirement. If your agency has 100 or more employees, then you can expect a vaccine and testing mandate for your employees whenever the new OSHA ETS is published and then becomes effective.

Although these new vaccine and testing mandates have just been announced and are not yet implemented, EMS agencies should prepare now for changes likely to be implemented in the coming months from OSHA and CMS. (Source: [JEMS](#))

Experts, COVID vaccine firms detail ways to scale up fair distribution

(CIDRAP) After a meeting with vaccine company executives, a multilateral group dedicated to improving global access to COVID-19 vaccines called on countries and manufacturers to urgently take several steps to ensure that 40% of the population in all countries is vaccinated by the end of the year.

In other global developments, UNICEF today urged countries to reopen schools as soon as possible to avoid further impacts on kids and economies. Countries with high vaccination rates have already bought 2 billion more doses than they need to fully vaccinate their populations, so the task force again called on the countries to swap their near-term delivery schedules with COVAX and Africa's vaccine initiative

Read full story for more: <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/09/experts-covid-vaccine-firms-detail-ways-scale-fair-distribution>

Opioid Vaccine Trials Begin

As New CDC Data Show Opioid Deaths Climbed Sharply In 2020

[WebMD](#) (9/15) reports according to a new CDC report, "opioid-related drug overdose deaths in the United States exploded to an estimated record high of 69,031 people in 2020, topping the 49,860 deaths logged in 2019," with most of the deaths linked to "synthetic opioids such as fentanyl." Meanwhile, "researchers are studying a possible bridge to successful recovery: A vaccine that could blunt the drugs' ability to cause harm. The first such vaccines are now entering clinical trials, raising hopes of adding another tool to the anti-addiction armamentarium.

Indiana State Troopers Find Substantial Amount of Fentanyl During Traffic Stop

The [Clinton County \(IN\) Daily News](#) (9/15, Hartman) reports an Indiana State Police Trooper stopped a vehicle Monday on I-70 east of Indianapolis for following another vehicle too closely, leading to the discovery of 15.8 pounds of what are believed to be Fentanyl laced pills and 4.4 pounds of pure Fentanyl hidden under the rear passenger seat. 39 year old Felix Becerra Aguilera of California was the driver and sole occupant of the vehicle, he was arrested on preliminary drug charges and transported to the Hancock County Jail."

The [AP](#) (9/15) also covers this story.

Facility in Iceland Is Now Sucking CO2 From the Air

It's the world's biggest carbon capture plant

([Newser](#)) – The world's biggest carbon capture plant is now sucking CO2 from the air in Iceland—and while the amounts involved are relatively tiny compared to the massive scale of the world's emissions problem, its builder says it is a step in the right direction. The plant, built on a lava plain near a source of geothermal energy, filters carbon dioxide out of the air, [Deutsche Welle](#) reports. The gas is then mixed with water and injected deep into nearby rock, where it will turn to stone in around two years. The plant, known as Orca, can capture 4,000 metric tons of carbon a year, the equivalent of the emissions produced by around 870 cars.

Full story: <https://www.newser.com/story/311084/worlds-largest-carbon-capture-plant-opens.html>

ASPR TRACIE - [The Express for September 2021](#)

This issue of *The Express* highlights the following new resources:

- [The Effect of COVID-19 on the Healthcare Incident Command System](#)
- [COVID-19: Concerns and Opportunities for Healthcare Leadership](#)
- [Innovations in COVID-19 Patient Surge Management](#)
- [The Work-Life Pandemic Puzzle: Putting the Pieces Back Together, but Better](#) (speaker series recording)
- [Poison Center Roles during the Pandemic](#) (speaker series recording)
- [Pharmaceutical Cache Resources](#) (technical assistance [TA] response)
- [Hospital Surge of Patients with Behavioral Health Challenges during COVID-19](#) (TA response)
- [Afghan Relocation Response](#) (TA response)

ASPR TRACIE recently launched a [COVID-19 Patient Surge and Scarce Resource Allocation page](#) where users can easily access related information. Our [Hurricane Resources Page, Issue 10 of The Exchange](#) (on preparing for and responding to wildfires and planned outages), and [Natural Disasters Topic Collection](#) (featuring a new video "[Wildfire Smoke and Indoor Air Quality: How to Create a Clean Room at Home](#)") may be useful as our stakeholders experience related challenges.

Please continue to access our [Novel Coronavirus Resources Page](#), the National Institutes of Health [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Treatment Guidelines](#), and CDC's [Coronavirus webpage](#), and [reach out](#) if you need technical assistance.

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 add or delete, 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.