



August 24, 2021

NEWS RELEASE

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Kern County Public Health Announces Latest COVID-19 Facts and Implements the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Surge Plan

- There are 442 newly reported confirmed cases in Kern County, bring our total confirmed cases to date to 121,299.
- There are no new deaths being reported today, but there have been 1,448 COVID-19 deaths since the start of the pandemic.
- The 14-day case rate is 32.35 per 100,000.
- As of August 22, 707,955 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to Kern County residents. 336,455 or 44.6% of Kern's eligible population have been *fully* vaccinated against COVID-19.
- As of August 23, Kern County had 236 COVID-19 related hospitalizations and 48 were in the ICU.

In the most recent three weeks there has been a 50.6% increase in first doses of the COVID-19 vaccines administered in Kern County. We continue to urge everyone eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine as it remains one of the greatest weapons against this virus. Vaccination appointments for 12+ can be made by visiting myturn.ca.gov.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kern County is seeing a significant increase in 911 calls and is experiencing a strain on our emergency response system. Therefore, Kern County Public Health's Emergency Medical Services Program is implementing the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Surge Plan that was originally introduced in December 2020. These alterations to the normal EMS system of care are designed to provide the best level of patient care by integrating additional resources and helping to prioritize our responses as the system becomes further impacted by the current pandemic.

"During times of extraordinary stress on our system, ensuring that those needing the most critical services are prioritized is of the utmost importance," said Brynn Carrigan, Director of Kern County Public Health Services.

This plan has 4 levels that determine specific actions based upon thresholds met in some or all of the following areas:

- Volume of 911 calls
- Ambulance availability based on COVID-19 transports
- Patient offload times at hospitals
- Percentage of staff impacted by COVID-19

The EMS system has met the threshold for Level 2, or the yellow tier, of the EMS System Surge Plan. Changes to the system will be implemented later this week.

Changes to the system that the community may experience are as follows:

- Ambulances will only respond to low acuity 911 calls when there are sufficient resources available. If an ambulance is not available to be dispatched, the caller will be informed of the situation and provided

other options for obtaining care by the approved ambulance dispatch center, including contacting a primary care physician or urgent care.

- The County has integrated an additional emergency response agency, Pro-Safety into the system to respond to low acuity calls when ambulances are not available.

To view the EMS System Surge Plan visit our website at <https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/>.

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