

COVID Update November 13, 2020

The fall surge that has hit the Midwest particularly hard appears to have begun in the upstate. On Thursday, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control announced 1,243 new confirmed cases and 67 new probable cases of the novel coronavirus Thursday as well as 8 additional confirmed deaths.

Nearly 40% of the state's cases, 38.9% to be precise, came from four Upstate counties. Greenville and Spartanburg led the state — Greenville with 250 confirmed cases, twice as much as Spartanburg with 127. Anderson had 67 cases and ranked fifth among South Carolina's 46 counties, and Pickens had 40.

Since Monday there has been a 10% jump in the ratio of occupied hospital beds in the Upstate (73% to 83.6%) The total number of individual test results reported to DHEC Wednesday statewide was 8,659 (not including antibody tests) and the percent positive was 14.4%. The overall SC percent positive had consistently been around 5% prior to the recent surge.

DHEC warned in a statement Thursday that the recent rise of COVID-19 cases in the state could be a "fall surge," highlighting rising numbers in the Upstate in particular. In a telebriefing Thursday afternoon, assistant state epidemiologist Dr. Jane Kelly urged people to "recommit themselves to the fight against COVID-19. We're calling on South Carolina residents to remain vigilant," she said.

For the Upstate, which is seeing some of its highest daily numbers of new cases since August, Kelly said there's "no mysterious new development" behind that trend. "We don't have evidence that there's been some huge outbreak in a business facility. It's been community spread," she said.

As more people travel during the holidays, DHEC urges South Carolinians to "be positive you're negative" by routinely getting tested if you're regularly out in the community.

On Friday, the United States set a record of more than 126,400 confirmed COVID-19 cases in a single day, on Saturday the record was again broken and over 1,000 deaths were reported. On Tuesday, the record was broken again as new cases in the US reached an all time high of 139,000 and hospitalizations set a record as well at 61,964. The seven-day rolling average of new daily cases in the U.S. topped 100,000 for the first time, at 104,000 on Saturday, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

Total U.S. cases since the pandemic began are nearing 10 million, and confirmed cases globally are approaching 50 million. Worldwide infection numbers are also setting records, reaching 400,000 daily confirmed cases Oct. 15, 500,000 on Oct. 26 and 600,000 Friday.

The virus has killed more than 236,000 Americans. The seven-day rolling average for daily deaths in the U.S. has risen in the past two weeks from 772 on Oct. 23 to 911 on Friday.

In Texas, a district judge upheld an order from El Paso County's top elected official shutting down businesses while the region fights an alarming surge in COVID-19 cases.

On Monday Pfizer announced that early data analysis shows their vaccine to be 90% effective. In 43,000 study volunteers among whom 94 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were diagnosed, of those who received two doses of the vaccine, 90% occurred in the unvaccinated participants and fewer than 10% in those who had received the vaccine. Pfizer will ask the FDA for emergency use authorization to being administering the vaccine as soon as volunteers have been followed for two months following the second vaccine, which will occur in the third week of November. They also are adding new endpoints to the study, to look at whether the vaccine prevents severe infection, and whether it provides long term immunity even in patients who have been infected with COVID previously.

Notre Dame students were notified on Monday that they will be required to have a negative coronavirus test before leaving campus for the holidays, due to 'numerous parties' over the weekend, which included thousands of students storming the field and celebrating after the double over-time win against Clemson on Saturday. Students with a positive test or an exposure will be required to quarantine for two weeks, and those who leave campus without a negative test will not be allowed to register for classes next semester.

President Elect Biden announced on his transition website his thirteen-member COVID task force, who are all public health experts. The team will be chaired by former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy.

Anderson City Council voted to extend the Anderson city mask ordinance until January 22 after David Baker, Director of Emergency Services for the Anderson County Sheriff's Office, spoke to the Council and shared data that the zip codes within the city limits, which followed the mask ordinance, had fewer cases of COVID than those outside the city limits that did not.