



Tuolumne County Public Health Department

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Since Thanksgiving, California experienced our most intense COVID-19 surge yet, which required us to take immediate action to keep our hospital capacity intact. Starting seven weeks ago, our hospitals and front-line medical workers were stretched to their limits.

Our surge after the December holidays was intense, but our Regional Stay-At-Home Orders helped to lessen the strain on ICUs.

Simply put: Californians heard the urgent message to stay home when possible. Our curve is flattening, with case rates, case positivity, the rate of transmission, hospital admissions all on the decline and ICU admissions inching downward.

ICU bed availability four weeks from now are anticipated to above 15 percent. The California Department of Public Health is ending the regional stay at home order in Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area Regions. The Limited Stay at Home Order (curfew) is ended with the exit of all regions from a regional stay at home order.

This is still a precarious moment. Although we anticipate increased ICU availability by early February, we still near zero percent ICU bed availability in our region. With case rates remaining high across most of the state, the statewide Surge Order will remain in place to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed.

Counties will be assigned to their Blueprint tiers as posted on January 19th. All counties except one will be placed into the purple tier (Tuolumne County will be in Purple Tier), meaning that under the State's guidance:

- Restaurants may open for outdoor dining
- Certain low-risk youth sports competitions may resume
- Nail salons and hairdressers may reopen indoors with modifications
- Gyms may operate outdoors with modifications

Tomorrow, CDPH will reevaluate the Blueprint tiers, with all but a handful of counties likely to remain in the purple tier. The state as a whole will return to the tier system under the Blueprint for a Safer Economy going forward.

We must all remain vigilant, and keep wearing masks, maintaining social distance, limiting gatherings, and following the guidance appropriate for our county's tier, but together, 40 million Californians have made progress, and with it, the ability to start to slowly reopen.

Although reopening brings risks of increased transmission, our health care system has adapted to manage higher rates of hospitalizations, and the holiday season when families travel, and gather is behind us. We encourage all residents to get a vaccine when it is available.

We hope that the State will not need to resort to such strict measures to keep our health care system protected and to save lives, but it remains a possibility. Tuolumne County will continue to take public health measures necessary to protect vulnerable Californians and the health care delivery system. With everyone's continued collaboration, we hope to continue on the path to reopening.

Dr. Sergienko, interim Tuolumne County Public Health Officer states "As the state relaxes regional guidance, it becomes critical for us to take those community and individual actions, like wearing a mask, that we know we reduce transmission."

For more questions, please reach out to Tuolumne County Public Health or Tuolumne County Office of Emergency Services.