



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Crystal Staley

502-545-3714

Sebastian Kitchen

502-330-0799

502-564-2611

Gov. Beshear: Previous Spike in COVID-19 Cases Leads to Record 54 Reported Deaths

Vaccine update, safe winter holidays guidance provided

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 17, 2020) – On Thursday, Gov. Andy Beshear updated Kentuckians on COVID-19 and said while new cases continue to plateau and the state’s positivity rate declines, the commonwealth set a record of newly reported deaths – a result of the state’s previous spike in cases.

“Our death report today is by far the most people that we’ve lost, and remember, that’s a reflection of where this virus was about three weeks ago, where it was trending,” said Gov. Beshear. “I hope we don’t have another day like this, ever. These are 54 families that need our help and compassion and green lights. They also need us to do better.”

The state’s previous record of 38 deaths was reported Dec. 2. Gov. Beshear [took action](#) on Nov. 18 to stop the rampant spread of COVID-19 and save Kentuckians’ lives while keeping the economy open.

The Governor announced that [more shipments](#) of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would be arriving in the commonwealth over the next two weeks for front-line health care workers and long-term care employees and residents.

Gov. Beshear also previewed a multimedia campaign to help all Kentuckians learn about the vaccine and its benefits to individuals, families and the commonwealth as a whole.

In the [White House report](#) this week, the Governor said Kentucky has seen stability in new cases and a decrease in our positivity rate. They also make recommendations to help protect those over age 65.

The Kentucky COVID-19 hotline, 800-722-5725, is now open 24 hours per day, seven days a week, for questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. The Governor noted this hotline cannot be used to schedule appointments for getting a vaccine; instead, it can be used to learn more about the safety of the vaccine. Gov. Beshear said he will continually update Kentuckians as the vaccine becomes more widely available.

While briefing Kentuckians today, the Governor received news that the U.S. Supreme Court refused to disturb the Sixth Circuit's order allowing the Governor to require all schools to briefly turn to virtual learning to help slow the virus when cases were skyrocketing in late November.

"The Supreme Court of the United States denied the Kentucky Attorney General's attempt to overturn the ruling in the Sixth Circuit that said we were treating all schools during this dangerous period the same and taking steps to protect the lives of those around us," said Gov. Beshear. "First, we didn't close any school, we just moved them to online, virtual instruction, and I think that's important, because suggesting a school is closed suggests that educators aren't working with students to provide the best experience possible, and they are doing a heck of a job.

"The second thing is, in no way were religious schools treated any differently. We asked everybody to make the same sacrifices. Everybody. Every school. Not picking on anybody, just asking every school to do the exact same thing. And guess what? We see with that and other steps it stopped an exponential growth that was threatening our hospital capacity.

"The things we've put into place have worked. We still have a lot longer to go in battling this virus, but I hope when we know things will work, that in the future everybody will say 'We'll do our part. We don't want to be an exception; we want to be part of the solution.'"

Today, Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Department for Public Health, highlighted the Kentucky Department for Public Health's (KDPH) winter holiday guidance, which includes:

- Limit the size of gatherings to two households and no more than eight people;
- Wear a face covering properly, sanitize hands often and stay six feet apart from other people;
- Do not host or participate in any in-person gatherings if you or anyone in your household, or if any of the invited attendees: Have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and [not met the criteria for when it is safe to be around others](#); have [symptoms of COVID-19](#); are waiting for COVID-19 [viral test](#) results; may have been [exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days](#); or are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19;
- Limit travel; and
- Keep gatherings outdoors or in well-ventilated spaces as much as possible.

To see all of KDPH's winter holiday guidance, click here: [full guidance](#), [one-pager](#), [single slide](#).

"Let's not do Christmas in a way that would dishonor loving our neighbors as ourselves," said Gov. Beshear.

The Governor also shared good news from across the commonwealth.

Today, Gov. Beshear [announced](#) \$450,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission's Distressed County Infrastructure Program to upgrade the wastewater system in Middlesboro.

In addition, he said that Taica Cubic Printing Kentucky LLC, which provides cubic printing, paint application and assembly services on molded substrates for Tier 1 automotive suppliers, [plans to expand](#) its Clark County facility with a \$4.4 million investment expected to create 20 well-paying jobs.

Finally, Gov. Beshear [said Thursday](#) the commonwealth is in an even stronger position to help Kentuckians as we emerge from this pandemic after the Kentucky Supreme Court reinstated an almost \$1.3 billion award for Kentucky in a judgment against PokerStars. The Supreme Court reinstated the Franklin Circuit Court judgment, concluding the commonwealth's decade-long fight against illegal offshore internet gambling.

In 2008, J. Michael Brown, then-Secretary of the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet under Gov. Steve Beshear who now serves as Gov. Andy Beshear's

executive cabinet secretary, brought actions on behalf of the commonwealth in Franklin Circuit Court seeking to stop the unregulated, untaxed and illegal offshore gambling operations that were operating in Kentucky.

Case Information

As of 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 17, Gov. Beshear reported the following COVID-19 numbers:

- New cases today: 3,349
- New deaths today: 54
- Positivity rate: 8.45%
- Total deaths: 2,316
- Currently hospitalized: 1,817
- Currently in ICU: 431
- Currently on ventilator: 254

Top counties with the most positive cases today are: Jefferson, Kenton, Boone, Fayette, Campbell, Pulaski and Hardin. Each of these counties reported 100 or more new cases; Jefferson County alone reported 475.

The red zone counties can be found [here](#). Community leaders, businesses, schools and families in these counties should all follow [red zone reduction recommendations](#), as well as other orders and guidance.

Those reported lost to the virus today include two men, ages 67 and 72, from Bullitt County; a 94-year-old woman from Calloway County; an 83-year-old woman from Carroll County; a 47-year-old man from Casey County; an 81-year-old woman and a 69-year-old man from Christian County; a 97-year-old woman and an 82-year-old man from Clinton County; a 76-year-old man from Daviess County; a 92-year-old woman from Fayette County; an 88-year-old woman from Graves County; two women, ages 63 and 68, from Grayson County; an 85-year-old woman from Hardin County; a 94-year-old man from Henderson County; a 65-year-old woman and two men, ages 64 and 98, from Hopkins County; two women, ages 82 and 97, and two men, ages 47 and 87, from Jefferson County; an 85-year-old woman and a 55-year-old man from Jessamine County; a 77-year-old man from Johnson County; a 66-year-old man from Kenton County; a 75-year-old woman and a 79-year-old man from Knott County; a 75-year-old man from Larue County; an 88-year-old woman from Logan County; four women, ages 76, 85, 90 and 99, and two men, ages 77 and 89, from Madison County; two men, ages 83

and 87, from Mason County; an 88-year-old woman from McLean County; a 76-year-old man from Monroe County; an 81-year-old woman and a 77-year-old man from Muhlenberg County; a 61-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man from Nelson County; three men, ages 75, 86 and 95, from Oldham County; two men, ages 70 and 87, from Robertson County; a 63-year-old man from Russell County; a 92-year-old woman from Spencer County; a 73-year-old woman from Union County; and a 58-year-old woman from Washington County.

Healthy at Home Eviction Relief Fund

Today, the Governor updated Kentuckians that the application for the \$15 million *Healthy at Home* Eviction Relief Fund closed at noon today, after 396 new completed applications were received. Gov. Beshear said those applications are expected to exhaust all remaining funds. As of today, the fund has approved \$12,959,082 in assistance to 3,477 households.

More Information

To view the [full daily report](#), [incidence rate map](#), testing locations, long-term care and other congregate facilities update, school reports and [guidance](#), [red zone counties](#), [red zone recommendations](#), the White House Coronavirus Task Force reports for Kentucky and other key guidance visit, kycovid19.ky.gov.

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