

CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

A weekly digest to keep you up to speed on the California coronavirus outbreak.

March 24, 2021

Welcome to the 54th issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter. Before we get started with this week's news, we want to remind you that we have updated our FAQs on [Guidance for Employers](#), [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\)](#) and [Direct Payments and Other Relief](#).

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The Economy & Your Finances: Federal and state tax deadlines extended

The IRS [extended the tax filing deadline](#) for income taxes for the 2020 tax year. The new deadline is May 17, 2021, instead of April 15. [California](#) has also postponed its due date to May 17.

Individual taxpayers who pay their 2020 taxes in full by May 17, 2021, will not be subject to

penalties and interest. Even with the extension, the IRS urges taxpayers who are [owed refunds](#) to file their taxes as soon as possible.

U.S. jobless claims rose to [770,000](#), signaling that layoffs remain high even as many parts of the country reopen. In [California](#), jobless claims have sat at above 100,000 for the past two weeks. Thus far, California has regained only 34 percent of the jobs it lost due to the coronavirus.

California's backlog of [unemployment claims](#) has surged to well over 1 million. And delays at the Employment Development Department (EDD) could mean that nearly 2.4 million Californians will have to wait weeks before receiving their [extended jobless benefits](#) through the American Rescue Plan Act. Although some members with existing PUA claims have reported receiving EDD notifications stating that extended benefits aren't available, the [EDD recently announced that](#) it's working on updating its system to implement extended federal unemployment benefits under the new law. The EDD anticipates that Californians with existing PUA claims should be able to certify for benefits by April 10, 2021 and those collecting regular UI benefits should expect to continue receiving the \$300-per-week federal unemployment supplement without interruption.

Sources: USA Today, Internal Revenue Service, California Franchise Tax Board, AP News, Los Angeles Daily News, The Mercury News, The San Francisco Chronicle, California Employment Development Department

The Market & Industry: Mortgage rates climb

California home sales [rose solidly in February](#), with year-to-date home sales up 15.9 percent. [Mortgage rates](#) have continued to climb, rising above 3 percent last week, and the rate of both mortgage demand and [refinance demand](#) has cooled in response.

According to Freddie Mac's latest [consumer survey](#), homeowners and renters are growing more confident about their ability to pay their rent or mortgage. The percentage of mortgages in forbearance fell last week, but the pace of improvement is decelerating.

Meanwhile, [cost of materials](#) continues to challenge the construction of new homes. Housing starts nationwide fell 10.3 percent in February. Homebuilding will likely continue to decline over the next few weeks, as housing permits declined 10.8 percent in February.

Sources: C.A.R., CNBC, HousingWire, REALTOR® Magazine

Around the State: Vaccines could be available to all by May 1

On Friday, Governor Newsom announced that the state could make vaccines available to all Californians [by early May](#). This timeline corresponds to President Biden's, as the White House is working to make all American adults [eligible](#) for vaccination by May 1. To date, approximately 15,152,845 vaccines have been administered and 12.6 percent of Californians are fully vaccinated. The statewide average for ICU bed availability is 30 percent, and the state is averaging a 2.0 percent positivity rate for tests. Cases in California numbered 3,625,308 and deaths had reached 57,417.

California [expanded vaccine eligibility](#) last week to include more than 4 million Californians between ages 16 and 65 with underlying health conditions. The [verification process](#) for this group will be looser than for previous groups in order to protect patient privacy and preserve California's commitment to vaccine equity. Last week, California was rated among the [five worst states](#) at distributing shots to the communities that need them most.

More counties across California are moving to [less restrictive tiers](#) on [California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). Here's a [list](#) of what businesses and activities are allowed to open per tier.

Sources: Los Angeles Times, The White House, Deadline, SF Gate, The Mercury News

Health Check-Up: CDC urges the fully vaccinated to keep wearing masks

The CDC says there is not yet enough data to prove whether vaccinated people can carry the virus and infect others with it. Until transmission with vaccination is better understood, the CDC urges fully vaccinated people to [continue wearing masks](#) to protect their communities.

Last week, the CDC relaxed its rule that students should remain six feet apart while in classrooms. The new guideline says students only need to be [three feet apart](#) so long as everyone is wearing a mask and community transmission is not high.

A large clinical trial in the United States revealed the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University [provides strong protection](#) against COVID-19 and completely eliminates the worst outcomes from the disease. But just a day later, federal health officials said the promising results may have relied on "[outdated information](#)." Because the United States has already granted emergency use authorization to three other vaccines, the FDA is unlikely to move as quickly to grant authorization to the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Sources: CNN, The New York Times



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