



CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

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

August 26, 2020

Welcome to the 24th issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter. Before we get started, we want to make sure you're aware of the [services the Small Business Administration \(SBA\) has made available to California businesses and residents affected by the wildfires](#). These services are only available for the California disaster declaration as a result of the wildfires that began Aug. 14, 2020, and not for COVID-19 related assistance. C.A.R. also has a relief fund for REALTORS® impacted by wildfires and other national disasters — [see here for more information](#).

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The Economy & Your Finances: Calif. approved for \$4.5B federal grant for increased unemployment benefits

California was approved Friday to receive a [\\$4.5 billion federal grant](#) to continue providing increased unemployment benefits to eligible California traditional unemployment (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) recipients. These funds will provide an additional \$300 per week (on top of the existing state benefit) to claimants who are unemployed or partially unemployed due to COVID-19 and who already receive at least \$100 per week in either UI or PUA, with the additional benefit retroactive to the week beginning July 26. California's EDD has said that payments will begin in September and will cover a minimum of three weeks, and will continue until funds run out. This grant was made as part of the Lost Wages Assistance program established by the President's Executive Order authorizing FEMA to spend disaster relief funds on additional unemployment benefits.

An additional [1.1 million American](#) workers sought jobless benefits last week, an increase from the week before and an indication that the recovery process is still volatile. In California, unemployment fell to [13.3 percent](#), and in Southern California it's at [15.9 percent](#) — both improvements from June's numbers, but still well below the national average of 10.2 percent.

There are [positive signs](#) the economy is improving: Retail sales rebounded to an all-time high last month, and [housing markets](#) continue to surge. Still, in a recent survey of economists by the [National Association for Business Economics](#), half of respondents said they don't anticipate U.S. gross domestic product completely rebounding until at least the second half of 2022. Four in five economists said there's at least a 25 percent chance of a "double-dip" recession.

Sources: KRCR TV, USA Today, The San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Daily News, Business Insider, C.A.R. Research & Economics, CNN

The Market & Industry: No move yet on eviction legislation, housing market still hot

A [state bill](#) that would ban evictions for missing rent across California passed through the

Senate Judiciary Committee last week. If passed, AB 1436 would halt evictions for rent non-payment due to pandemic hardships until 90 days after the current state of emergency is lifted or April 2021, whichever comes first — it would also provide mortgage forbearance for homeowners and landlords.

State lawmakers are [working to find a compromise](#) between various bills to address the issue. Last Thursday, state lawmakers [declined to back a plan](#) that would have provided tax credits to landlords. If nothing changes, evictions will resume in California on September 2, which could result in a new wave of homelessness.

Meanwhile, [serious mortgage delinquencies](#) rose to hit a 10-year high last month, [up 1.8 million](#) from July 2019. And controversy continues to surround the new [mortgage refinance fee](#) of 0.5 percent, which both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac announced last week; yesterday, the [implementation date was extended](#) from September 1 to December 1.

The [late-summer housing market](#) is hot, with buyer interest particularly intense in [rural areas](#). Nationwide home sales rose a record [24.7 percent](#) from June to July; in California, they rose by [28.8 percent](#). Also home loan activity through the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) has climbed to a new high, and [Opendoor](#) has resumed iBuying in all of its markets.

We are taking weekly surveys of California REALTORS® and posting our results, along with other market data and analysis, to our website. [Check out these recaps](#) for more detailed insights into the current state of the market.

Sources: KQED, CAL Matters, Los Angeles Times, Inman News, The Washington Post, The Hill, HousingWire, REALTOR® Magazine, CNBC, C.A.R. Research & Economics

Around the State: Wildfire crisis complicated by COVID-19

California is [battling wildfires](#) that have torched more than 1.4 million acres and caused

tens of thousands of people to be evacuated. With firefighters stretched thin, the state cannot afford for them to get sick with COVID-19 — but [firefighters](#) present a unique challenge given they live in close quarters and can't wear masks while they work.

The wildfires have also created [significant air pollution](#) in the Bay Area, which has health experts concerned that smoke might make COVID-19 patients with asthma or lung disease even sicker. Scientists cannot say for certain whether air pollution makes contracting COVID-19 more likely, but some studies have linked [air pollution to increased susceptibility](#).

Last week, California reported the [fewest average cases and total hospitalizations](#) in nearly two months, though epidemiologists do warn this could change quickly. Last Thursday, California became the first state to surpass [600,000](#) COVID-19 cases. As of yesterday at 4:36 p.m., cases in California numbered 679,586 and deaths had hit 12,384. California has the highest number of coronavirus cases in the country, ahead of Florida and Texas.

[Napa County](#) and [Orange County](#) are among those counties that have been removed from the state watch list; despite Newsom's hopes, [San Francisco](#) remains on the watch list. Experts say restrictions like [local mask mandates and reversed reopenings](#) are working to flatten the curve.

Sources: The New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, SF Gate, The Mercury News, Los Angeles Times

Health Check-Up: Cloth masks don't protect against wildfire smoke

With the wildfires pushing Northern California's air quality up to [worst in the world](#) last week, many are asking their masks to do double duty: protect against the spread of COVID-19 and block the wearer from breathing in airborne particles from smoke. But regular masks don't protect against smoke, and the type of mask most frequently recommended — [the N95](#) — is in short supply this year due to the pandemic. Health

officials are stressing that the best protection from the smoke is to [stay indoors](#).

Researchers have identified a 33-year-old man living in Hong Kong as the [first recorded person to get COVID-19 twice](#). The patient was reinfected four and a half months after first contracting the virus, suggesting that post-infection immunity may not last very long.

The [CDC removed its recommendation](#) that travelers self-quarantine for 14 days when returning from a trip outside their country or state, although the California Department of Public Health still recommends that residents [avoid traveling long distances](#) for business or pleasure as much as possible.

Sources: The San Francisco Chronicle, CNN, USA Today



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