



## CORONAVIRUS

# California rushes to try to contain coronavirus among the homeless

By ADAM BEAM  
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Home to the largest homeless population in the country, California officials are rushing to get tens of thousands of people off the streets and into shelters and tents to slow the spread of the coronavirus among one of the most vulnerable and difficult-to-reach groups.

There has been only one confirmed death among California's estimated 150,000 homeless people, but authorities believe that without swift intervention, it's only a matter of time before the virus sweeps through homeless encampments and gathering spots where people are in close proximity and can't practice proper hygiene, like hand-washing.

Los Angeles has suspended an ordinance requiring tents to come down at night and has lined up dozens of trailers to use as isolation shelters. A charitable group in San Francisco was



People are seen in a homeless encampment on Thursday in Oakland, Calif. California Gov. Gavin Newsom has authorized \$150 million in emergency funding to protect homeless people in California from the spread of COVID-19.

passing out tents so people could use them to separate themselves from others. Both cities also are using recreational centers and other large, open indoor spaces to create emergency shelters that have more space between beds.

Mel Tillekeratne, a leading Los Angeles homeless advocate, said Thursday that people living in encampments are "beginning to feel the fear" over the virus. He's

the founder of the Shower of Hope, which contracts with local governments to provide pop-up stations with showers and other services for homeless people.

"They're asking, 'How can I get hand sanitizer?' 'How can I get information?'" Tillekeratne said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has directed state and local officials to rent hotel rooms and deploy travel trailers to house the homeless. Lawmakers

have given the Democratic governor up to \$1 billion to spend on the crisis, and on Wednesday he announced the first \$150 million would go to local governments to house the homeless.

A significant portion of the homeless population is addicted to drugs or alcohol or is mentally ill, conditions that in the past have made them resistant to accept help. Newsom has said he is not worried about that, adding that the state has "the capacity to encourage people off the streets."

"I think there's a lot of mythology about resistance; I think it's wildly overstated," Newsom told reporters this week. "I'm not ratcheting up a mindset of enforcement police state."

Tillekeratne said it's hard to imagine a scenario where authorities are rounding up homeless people exhibiting signs of the coronavirus and forcibly bringing them to shelters. However, he acknowledged that some won't want to go.



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

President Donald Trump listens as White House coronavirus response coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House on Friday in Washington.

## Trump moves on invoking powers to spur virus supplies

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has invoked the Defense Production Act to get needed medical supplies on the front lines of the coronavirus outbreak and the private sector mobilized against it.

Trump had said earlier in the week he would tap the act as needed. He said Friday he has put that "in gear."

Trump also announced an effective closure of the U.S. border with Mexico, prohibiting most travel except for trade. That brings it in line with the restriction on the Canadian border earlier this week. The U.S. is also suspending interest on student loans to help young people cope with job losses and the financial crunch.

More than 200 people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. and sickness from the disease is on the rise, with hospitals at risk of being overrun. Most people who get it have only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it

can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said he implored Trump during a phone call on Friday to invoke the Korean War-era act immediately to order the manufacture of ventilators and other critically needed medical gear. The president told Schumer he would, then could be heard on the telephone seeming to make the order. He yelled to someone in his office to do it now, said Schumer's spokesman, Justin Goodman.

The president and the Cabinet officials who briefed reporters focused on the border as they moved to restrict the entry of people without documentation to the U.S. This follows a stepped-up State Department travel advisory telling Americans they should not leave the country.

As Congress debated a financial relief package that could reach \$1 trillion, officials again urged Americans to maintain social distancing while Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, applauded strict new measures put in place by the governors of California and New York to limit mobility.

## Census Bureau delays deadline by 2 weeks

By MIKE SCHNEIDER  
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — The U.S. Census Bureau is delaying the deadline for counting everyone in the U.S. by two weeks because of the spreading novel coronavirus, officials said on Friday.

The 2020 census had been scheduled to stop at the end of July, but the deadline has now been extended to mid-August, said Tim Olson, an associate director for field operations at the bureau.

Most U.S. residents started being able to respond to the 2020 census last week when the bureau's website went live and people started receiving notices to participate in the mail. As of Friday,

18.6 million households had answered the questionnaire, primarily online, said Al Fontenot, the bureau's associate director for decennial programs.

This is the first once-a-decade census in which most people are being encouraged to fill out their form online, although people can still respond by telephone or by mailing back a form.

Earlier this week, the Census Bureau suspended field operations for two weeks out of concern about the health and safety of its workers and the U.S. public from the novel coronavirus. This primarily affected several thousands workers who were already dropping off questionnaires in rural areas with no fixed

addresses, Puerto Rico and tribal areas.

The Census Bureau also was pushing back by a month its operations to count the homeless, which was supposed to begin at the end of the month.

Most census takers won't go out into the field until May when they knock on the doors of homes whose residents haven't yet responded. The start of that operation also was pushed back two weeks to the end of May because of coronavirus.

"Of all of our worst nightmares of things that could have gone wrong with the census, we did not anticipate this set of actions," Fontenot said. "But our staff has been extremely resilient about

looking for solutions."

The bureau had planned to hire as many as 500,000 workers, primarily to knock on the doors of residents who haven't answered the questions by May, but bureau officials said on Friday that the virus outbreak was leading them to consider hiring more temporary workers than previously planned.

As of Friday, more than 600,000 applicants had accepted job offers, but the bureau officials said they realized that some might drop out because of the coronavirus, and the Census Bureau was keeping open its job application process. The bureau so far has 2.8 million applicants and has switched all training online for new hires.

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