



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

Confronting COVID: State Loosens Restrictions in San Mateo County

County moves to red Tier 2 effective Wednesday at 12:01 a.m.

Local health officials encourage residents to continue to get tested, follow health and safety guidelines

Redwood City – As San Mateo County’s COVID-19 positivity rate and other metrics improve, the state of California today announced the wider reopening of businesses and certain activities in the county.

The county as of 12:01 a.m. Wednesday (a minute after midnight) moves from the most-restrictive purple Tier 1 to red Tier 2 in the state’s [four-tier, color-coded](#) reopening plan.

The move allows changes for numerous types of businesses: restaurants can resume indoor dining with modifications; gyms can open indoors with modifications; and retail and shopping centers can increase capacity.

“This is great news for our small businesses and our entire community,” said Board President David J. Canepa. “And this move is a direct result of all of us taking personal responsibility for our actions. If we wear our damn masks, keep our distance and follow common-sense health and safety protocols, we can get back to doing what we all love to do.”

The county progressed to the red tier due to two metrics, calculated by the state: The case rate has fallen to 5.6 percent and the health equity quartile positivity rate to 3.7 percent. The health equity quartile measures rates of infection with the virus in the county’s most disadvantaged communities based on the [California Health Places Index](#).

The County’s outreach to and support of these communities in the Healthy Places Index are given significant weight in the State’s formula for the tier allocation.

“It is something to applaud,” said Louise Rogers, chief of San Mateo County Health. “Reducing that disparity is going in the right direction. Our goal is to drive that disparity, affecting our most impacted communities, to zero.”

Rogers said the rate of local COVID testing – 821 per 100,000 residents each day – places the county second to Yolo County in the most tests per day among the state’s 58 counties. “Testing remains important, so we have good information about the extent of the spread of the virus in our community,” Rogers said.

Local COVID-19 cases spiked in December 2020. Positive cases set a record of 546 on Jan. 4, 2021, then have fallen off over the past month. Still, cases have doubled since Dec. 9, 2020, from 19,107 to 38,353 through Sunday, Feb. 21, 2021.

To move to the next tier – orange Tier 2 that opens further sectors of the economy – positivity rates and additional metrics must continue to fall.

Note on school operations:

Decisions on public school operations are made by local school boards in consultation with the [San Mateo County Office of Education](#). Individuals interested in the potential impact on schools should contact local school districts.

Note on youth and adult recreational sports:

Individuals interested in the status of youth and adult recreational sports should check with local governing organizations, local parks and recreation departments or both. The California Department of Public Health has issued new [guidance on outdoor and indoor sports](#) that takes effect on Friday, Feb. 26, 2021.

Moving to Tier 2 (Red) allows:

- Restaurants indoors (max 25% capacity or 100 people, whichever is fewer)
- All retail indoors (max 50% capacity)
- Shopping centers, swap meets indoors (max 50% capacity, closed common areas, reduced capacity food courts)
- Personal care services – hair and nail salons, barbershops (open with modifications)
- Museums, zoos and aquariums (max 25% capacity)
- Places of worship (max 25% capacity)
- Movie theaters indoors (max 25% capacity or 100 people, whichever is fewer)
- Gyms and fitness centers indoors (max 10% capacity)
- Family entertainment centers (kart racing, mini-golf, batting cages) outdoors only with modifications

Amusement parks, bars without meal service, bowling alleys, indoor playgrounds, live theater, saunas and steam rooms, nightclubs and festivals are not permitted.

Businesses can find guidelines that apply to their industry on the [state's COVID-19 website](#).

Small private gatherings are allowed outdoors and indoors with modifications:

- Masks and physical distancing required
- No more than three separate households attend (including the host's)
- Gatherings should be 2 hours or less
- Those with symptoms must not attend
- Those at high risk of severe illness strongly encouraged not to attend
- Singing, shouting, chanting, cheering, or exercising strongly discouraged outdoors and not permitted indoors

See guidance for [gatherings](#).

Travel Recommendations

The state's [Travel Advisory](#) remains in effect:

Californians should remain local (not traveling more than 120 miles from their home or other place of residence) and avoid non-essential travel. Travelers from other states or countries entering into California for tourism and recreation are strongly discouraged.

Some travel is considered essential and necessary. "Essential travel" is travel associated with the operation, maintenance, or usage of critical infrastructure or otherwise required or expressly authorized by law (including other applicable state and local public health directives), including:

- Critical infrastructure (like the water supply or power grid)
- Economic services (like banking)
- Supply chains (like food distribution)
- Health care and immediate medical care
- Safety and security
- Work and study

Learn more about COVID-19 testing options in San Mateo County:

<https://www.smcgov.org/testing>

Learn more about COVID-19 vaccinations in San Mateo County:

<https://www.smchealth.org/covidvaccine>

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