



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

Director's Report for Health Commission Meeting of December 5, 2023

A current overview of issues affecting the state of public health in San Francisco

<https://sf.gov/departments/san-francisco-health-commission/past-meetings>

In alignment with the California Department of Public Health, we will no longer report on COVID-19 case data. More people are now testing themselves at home for COVID-19 and we do not get data from at-home testing. This affects the accuracy of data on testing volume. We will continue to report on key indicators of COVID-19 severity and spread including [hospitalizations](#), [deaths](#), and [test positivity](#).

LAGUNA HONDA WELCOMES NEW CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER / MEDICAL DIRECTOR

DPH is pleased to announce that Dr. Albert Lam, MD will be joining the Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) executive leadership team as the Medical Director/Chief Medical Officer, effective December 4, 2023. As part of the path to recertification, LHH made important changes in the executive leadership structure to align the organization with top-performing skilled nursing facilities. CMS and our expert consultants helped guide the new executive leadership structure and provided recommendations on the skills needed for existing and new leadership positions. This included for the position of Medical Director/Chief Medical Officer.

DPH worked with an executive search firm to conduct an exhaustive recruitment process. After outreach to hundreds of candidates, and a thorough review, we are excited to share our selection of Dr. Albert Lam.

Dr. Lam has the experience and expertise, including a skilled nursing facility/long-term care background, to lead the medical program at LHH and ensure excellent care for residents. Since 2015, Dr. Lam has led one of Northern California's top performing post-acute care departments at the Sutter Health Palo Alto Medical Foundation. During his time at Sutter Health, he served as the Founding Chair of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation Geriatrics Department. He was also the Senior Post-Acute Care Consultant to Sutter Health, where he provided expertise for the Sutter Medicare Direct Post-Acute Care strategy, partnerships, contracting, and network performance.

Dr. Lam holds a Doctor of Medicine, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Gerontology, from the University of Southern California.



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

AREA HEALTH OFFICERS RECOMMEND ACTIONS TO STAY HEALTHY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

As levels of circulating respiratory viruses increase and people spend more time indoors for the holiday season, it's important to know all the ways to stay healthy this winter. All Bay Area Health Officers recommend the following actions:

Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19, Flu and RSV.

- Staying up to date on vaccination is the best way to protect against severe COVID-19, influenza (flu) and RSV disease. These viruses pose the greatest risk to infants, older adults, and persons with certain health conditions. Getting recommended vaccines when pregnant protects pregnant people as well as their babies.
- One dose of this year's updated COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for everyone ages 6 months and older, at least two months after their last dose. Children 6 months to 4 years of age and immunocompromised persons who have never been vaccinated are recommended to get additional doses.
- People without insurance or whose insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines can get the updated COVID-19 vaccine for free through the Bridge Access Program. Visit vaccines.gov to find a location.
- Everyone 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine. Children 8 years and younger need 2 doses the first year they get the flu vaccine.
- Adults 60 years and older can get vaccinated against RSV to prevent severe illness. Pregnant people should also get the RSV vaccine at 32 to 36 weeks of pregnancy to protect their newborn. RSV vaccines are available at many pharmacies and healthcare providers.
- COVID-19, flu and RSV vaccines can be given at the same time.

Stay Home if You Are Sick.

- If you are feeling sick, the best way to keep from spreading illness to others is to stay home as much as you can until you have recovered, no matter which virus you have.
- People who need urgent or emergency medical care, including testing or treatment, should not hesitate to seek it.

Test Yourself if You Feel Sick.

- Reduce the chances of infecting someone else with COVID-19 by finding out if you have the virus. Test right away if you have symptoms of COVID-19, so that you can get treatment if you test positive. Remember, COVID-19 symptoms may be mild.
- Make sure to stock up on home test kits. This fall, every household can get up to eight free COVID-19 tests from the U.S. government by visiting <https://www.covid.gov/tests>.



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

Get Treatment.

- If you test positive for COVID-19, treatment is available. Medication for COVID-19 helps prevent hospitalization and is available to most adults and some teens with even mild symptoms.
- COVID-19 treatment works best when started right after symptoms begin, and within five days of symptoms starting.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about treatment options or visit covid19.ca.gov/treatment.
- If you test positive for flu, treatment is available for those at high risk for severe illness.

Wear a Mask in Indoor Public Places and Improve Ventilation.

- For added protection, consider masking in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk for severe disease (over 65 years of age and/or persons with certain health conditions). Wearing a well-fitting high-quality mask, such as a KF94, KN95 or N95, can prevent infection with COVID-19, flu, RSV, and other respiratory viruses all at once.
- Wearing a mask can reduce your risk of getting sick and missing out on work, school, and holiday events.
- Masks also lower the likelihood that you pass on an infection if you are already sick, even if your symptoms are mild. This helps protect people around you, especially those at higher risk of serious illness.
- Improve ventilation indoors by turning on HVAC systems, filtering the air with a portable HEPA filter (the same kind that many use for wildfire smoke), pointing fans out open windows, or opening doors and windows when possible. These can all help viruses from spreading indoors.

Health Officers from the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, Sonoma, and the city of Berkeley encourage the public to take these easy steps to protect themselves and others this holiday season.

PROBLEMATIC COVID TEST SITES CEASE OPERATIONS AFTER CITY ENFORCEMENT ACTION

San Francisco City Attorney David Chiu, Mayor London N. Breed, Health Officer Dr. Susan Philip, and SFPD Chief Bill Scott announced that Gentech, an outdoor COVID-19 testing operator, has agreed to cease all virus testing operations in San Francisco, following conversations with the City and multi-department enforcement efforts.



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

For months, Gentech operated out of their characteristic green tents advertising COVID-19, flu, and RSV tests. In addition to a lack of personal protective equipment and compliance with sanitation requirements, Gentech paid members of the public \$5 in cash for every test taken. Many of the testing tents operated near open air drug markets, and the cash payments appeared to facilitate drug sales and activity.

After a multi-department enforcement effort to ensure compliance with a recently issued Health Order, the City Attorney's Office engaged with counsel for Gentech and the company agreed to cease operations in San Francisco.

On October 11, San Francisco Health Officer Dr. Susan Philip issued a [Health Order](#) setting standards for sites that collect specimens for COVID-19, flu, RSV, or other viruses to ensure they meet minimum infection control and safety standards.

The order put in place clear infection control and safety standards to make sure that there is no inadvertent risk of transmission of a virus from members of the public seeking a test to workers at the collection sites. Those standards, along with minimum privacy standards, ensure that the public has confidence in the public health testing process and that the testing is being conducted by a trusted and verified source.

Following issuance of the Health Order, DPH's Environmental Health Branch and SFPD initiated an enforcement campaign to ensure compliance with the Order and deter any ancillary illegal activity.

As the demand for virus testing increases during the winter months, members of the public should be aware that the Health Order requires specimen collection sites to partner with a trusted community entity located San Francisco, such as a government agency, school, or healthcare provider. Information about COVID-19 testing options can be found [here](#).

ACKNOWLEDGING DPH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO APEC

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR) branch was honored to coordinate the Department's planning and response to the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit. This event, held November 13-November 18, 2023, was the first National Security Special Event (NSSE) to be hosted in California, and the largest gathering of international leaders in San Francisco since the signing of the UN charter in 1945. The summit welcomed leaders and delegates from the 21 APEC member economies, including the President and



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

the Vice President of the United States. In coordination with Federal, State, Regional, and local City & County of San Francisco partners, PHEPR was instrumental in leading DPH in the successful public health and healthcare system planning and readiness for the event.

The public health mission for APEC was to ensure minimal disruption to health and medical services and be ready to respond to and mitigate unexpected adverse impacts. DPH's preparations for the event would not have been possible without the intensive planning with internal and external department stakeholders that began in May 2023. Leading up to APEC, PHEPR ensured cross-communication between DPH teams supporting APEC operations, coordinated personnel and other resources, conducted preparedness trainings and exercises, supported community messaging, and facilitated contingency planning for departmental and SF healthcare facilities. PHEPR activated the Department of Operations Center (DOC) from November 13th to November 17th to monitor and respond to potential disruptions to DPH, local health facilities and community partners.

Below are some notable PHEPR planning accomplishments:

- Created a map of all SF healthcare facilities which was a crucial resource for identifying sites that were within impacted areas.
- Conducted a seminar and tabletop exercise with key DPH response and leadership personnel to plan for and mitigate biological threats.
- Conducted a seminar and tabletop exercise with key DPH response staff, DPH leadership personnel, local agency partners, regional partners and State of California Department of Public Health personnel to plan for and mitigate chemical threats.
- Conducted mass casualty emergency patient management trainings including disaster trainings for select DPH clinics and a tabletop exercise for acute care hospitals focusing on mass casualty emergencies and accommodation of dignitaries at medical facilities.
- Facilitated information sharing including weekly internal DPH briefings prior to APEC, a briefing for regional public health and medical stakeholders, and internal DPH daily briefings and situation status reports during the event.
- Partnered with DPH Public Affairs as well as community and equity branches of DPH to develop messaging around preparing for health impacts and drafted and distributed messaging to community-based organizations and contracted partners.
- In collaboration with DPH Public Affairs, PHEPR conducted broad outreach to medical facilities via written guidance, email messaging, and phone calls.
- PHEPR staff represented DPH in the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) also activated the week of November 13-November 17. This enabled DPH to share



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
London N. Breed
Mayor

information, problem-solve, and collaborate directly with other key city response agencies.

DPH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH BRANCH SUPPORT APEC SUCCESS

The DPH Environmental Health Branch (EHB) had approximately 20 staff providing support across APEC events. This included partnering with the US Food & Drug Administration and sending the inspectors assigned to APEC to a specialized Food Defense Training program. For the APEC event, DPH staff were tasked with ensuring that all food facilities located within a quarter mile of venues like the Moscone Center had received a current food safety inspection. In addition, staff conducted food risk assessments of all related event menus, vetted event retail and wholesale suppliers, and had staff monitoring the preparations and service of any meal provided by a caterer at National Special Security Events.

In addition to food safety, EHB was also responsible for Hazardous Materials Emergency Response. This team of DPH staff are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, ready to respond to any incident involving hazardous materials. During APEC this group's duties included radiological monitoring, decontamination, and overall threat mitigation as part of a Joint Hazard Assessment Team.

Thank you to the many staff members across DPH whose work was instrumental to the success of APEC. We are grateful!

COVID-19 UPDATE

As of 11/30:

- San Francisco's 7-day rolling average of COVID test positivity is 6.2% and there are 28 COVID hospitalizations.
- Twenty-one percent of SF residents are fully up to date on their COVID vaccinations and have received the updated vaccine.

[DPH in the News](#)