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Austin, August 22 (RHC)-- The new wave of COVID-19 pandemic in the United States is having a devastating effect on hospitals in the south-central state of Texas, with state officials terming it "one of its

worst fights."

The second largest state in the U.S. has averaged more than 15,000 new cases a day this week, up from an average of more than 10,000 cases a day two weeks earlier. The alarming surge in new hospitalizations comes amid growing debate over mandatory mask wearing and debilitating health care facilities with hospitals stretched to capacity.

The state's health authorities were quoted as saying by the CNN that Texas was battling a vicious wave of COVID-19 pandemic driven by new variants. "Hospital capacity concerns are worsening. Fatalities are increasing faster," the state's health department said Wednesday, complaining of the dearth of ICU beds.

A member of Texas medical association's Covid-19 task force told Texas Tribune that the state was entering the worst surge in sheer numbers.

"This is the fourth round of what should have been a three-round fight. We do have very sincere concerns that the numbers game is going to overwhelm us," Dr. Mark Casanova said.

"We have no beds, and then that's the end of the conversation. Some will say 'we are closed, we are on full divert, we've been on full divert for two weeks'," a doctor was quoted as saying by KBTX. "Sometimes on the other end of the phone you get someone that says, 'I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.' Because they know we are desperate."

Although more than 60 percent people in the state have received at least one shot of Covid-19 vaccine, the vaccination does not given full immunity and protection against new variants like delta.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott's positive test for Covid-19 on Tuesday made it emphatically clear. Abbott, who is fully vaccinated, has now been isolated. Abbott had been a strong opponent of mask and vaccine mandates. A day before contracting the virus, he told a gathering that masks were optional.

At least 10 other sitting governors — four Democrats and six Republicans — have been infected with the virus since the pandemic began, according to reports compiled by Ballotpedia. However, what is alarming is the speed with which people, including federal and state officials, have been contracting the virus after being vaccinated fully.

Three U.S. senators - Republican Roger Wicker of Mississippi, Democrat John Hickenlooper of Colorado and independent Angus King of Maine - disclosed on Thursday they had tested positive for the virus. All three have been fully vaccinated.

On Wednesday, the U.S. recorded more than 1,000 COVID-19 deaths in a single day, returning to the number previously seen in April. According to a Reuters report, infections are also on the rise in the country. The US has recorded an average of more than 100,000 new daily cases for the past 12 days, marking a six-month high.

The rapid spread of the delta variant of the coronavirus, which is considered more infectious than other variants, has once again pushed cases and hospitalizations in the world's worst-hit country.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Delta variant now accounts for more than 98.8 percent of cases in the country.

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