

U.S. sees nearly half a million COVID-19 cases in one week

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Washington, October 27 (RHC)-- Nearly half a million people in the United States have contracted the novel coronavirus in the last seven days, according to a tally by news agency Reuters, as cases and hospitalisations set fresh records in hot spots in the Midwest.

More than 5,600 people died from the virus nationwide in the last week, with hospitalisations shooting up 13 percent, a Reuters analysis showed.

Illinois, which has emerged as a hot spot in recent weeks, reported more than 31,000 new cases in the last seven days, more new infections than any other state except Texas. To try and contain the surge, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker imposed fresh rounds of restrictions in six of 11 regions.

Indoor dining in bars and restaurants will be suspended by Wednesday and gatherings will be limited to 25 people under a state formula that triggers “mitigation” when the positivity rate tops 8 percent for at least two days in a row. The affected areas include some Chicago suburbs.

Other states have walked back reopening plans to curb the spread of the virus as cooler weather sets in across most of the nation. Idaho Governor Brad Little announced that indoor gatherings of more than 50 people would be prohibited, and outdoor gatherings are to be capped at 25 percent capacity.

Health experts believe the virus is surging because of private social gatherings, colder temperatures driving people inside, and fatigue with COVID-19 precautions.

Beyond the Midwest, the Texas city of El Paso is also facing a surge in cases that is overwhelming local hospitals, with officials setting up an alternate care facility to help relieve medical centres.

"We are seeing all sorts of patients. The narrative historically has been the above-65, those with multiple co-morbidities. But we're seeing 20-year-olds. We're seeing 30-year-olds, 40-year-olds," Dr Ogechika Alozie, an infectious disease specialist in El Paso, told Reuters. "There's that exhaustion, but again, we buckle up and we take care of the patients."

U.S. President Donald Trump, facing a tough re-election battle on November 3, lashed out again at reports that the coronavirus is surging, and reiterated his false claim that the country is "rounding the turn" in its battle with the virus that has killed more than 226,000 people, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally.

Pennsylvania, a hotly contested "battleground" state in next week's election, on Tuesday reported a fresh record in new coronavirus cases, according to the state's health department.

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