

U.S. loses over 18,400 lives to COVID in deadliest week

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Tanna Ingraham places a sheet over the body of a patient who died in Houston, Texas. (Photo: Reuters)

Washington, January 5 (RHC)-- More than 18,400 Americans died from COVID-19 in the week ending January 3rd, bringing the pandemic's total to over 351,000 deaths in the United States. This has been the deadliest week so far in the U.S. as December was also the deadliest month of the pandemic

with nearly 78,000 deaths.

U.S. health officials warned that even more people will likely die in January despite the rollout of the COVID vaccines. The United States reported nearly 1.5 million new infections last week, up 16.5% from the previous seven days. More than 20 million Americans have been infected since the start of the pandemic.

Despite pleas to avoid traveling for the holidays, U.S. airports screened 1.3 million people on Sunday, the highest since mid-March. More than 126,000 COVID-19 patients are currently in US hospitals, up 25% from one month ago.

The states of Arizona, Tennessee and South Carolina reported the most new cases per capita last week. In terms of deaths per capita, Kansas, Wyoming and New Mexico were the hardest hit last week.

Across the United States, 13.6% of tests came back positive for the virus, up from 10.3% the prior week, according to data from the volunteer-run COVID Tracking Project. The World Health Organization considers positive test rates above 5% concerning because it suggests there are more cases in the community that have not yet been uncovered.

More than two-thirds of the 15 million coronavirus vaccines shipped within the United States have gone unused, U.S. health officials said on Monday.

New York and Florida are hitting snags in its vaccine rollout, with governors vowing to penalize hospitals that fail to dispense shots quickly.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Monday that hospitals must administer vaccines within a week of receiving them or face a fine and a reduction in future supplies. "I don't want the vaccine in a fridge or a freezer, I want it in somebody's arm," the governor said. "If you're not performing this function, it does raise questions about the operating efficiency of the hospital." Cuomo also announced the state's first known case of a new, more infectious coronavirus variant originally detected in Britain.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis also said, "Hospitals that do not do a good job of getting the vaccine out will have their allocations transferred to hospitals that are doing a good job at getting the vaccine out." "We do not want vaccine to just be idle at some hospital system," he added.

Dr. Amesh Adalja, a scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said New York and Florida were being "overly bureaucratic" in penalizing hospitals over vaccine deliveries even as they coped with soaring patient caseloads. "Instead of fining hospitals, why not give them more resources to do this, more money, more staffing?"

U.S. authorities are worried about the slower-than-expected uptake of available vaccines amid staggering human toll, an upending of daily social life and a stifling of economic activity. The U.S. federal government has distributed more than 15 million vaccine doses to states and territories across the country of 382 million citizens, but only about 4.5 million have been administered, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported.

Leading U.S. infectious disease specialist, Dr. Anthony Fauci said, "The logistics of getting it going into the people who want it is really the issue." "We're not where we want to be. No doubt about that. I don't think we can blame it all on vaccine hesitancy," Fauci said.



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