

COVID Purple Tier: Santa Clara County Hospitals ‘Are Prepared For A Very Dark Winter’

December 1, 2020 at 6:38 am

Filed Under: [COVID](#), [covid surge](#), [hospital care](#), [Purple Tier](#)

SAN JOSE (CBS SF) — On the front lines of the battle against the COVID-19 in Santa Clara County, the signs are not encouraging. Hospital beds are filling up as a surge in new cases continue to climb.

Santa Clara County Health Director Sara Cody said care facilities across the county are “feeling the pinch” as 801 new cases were reported Monday and 80 percent of the available hospital beds were in use.

Dr. Paul Silka, who heads up the Emergency Department at Regional Medical Center in San Jose, has been on the front line of care in the county which has been the epicenter of the pandemic since 57-year-old Patricia Dowd, a senior manager for a Silicon Valley semiconductor firm, was the first in the nation to die of the illness on Feb. 6th.

Since the outbreak began, Santa Clara County has had 35,085 confirmed COVID cases with 476 deaths.

“We are feeling the impact of additional COVID patients,” said Silka, whose hospital was treating 64 COVID-19 patients as of Monday.

He said they are “getting close” to the numbers they saw during the early days of the pandemic back in March and April. Now, Silka and his colleagues are bracing for an influx of sick patients who contracted the coronavirus at Thanksgiving get-togethers.

“We’re concerned. We are prepared for a very dark winter,” Silka told KPIX 5.

Doctors at Regional Medical said they learned some valuable lessons during that time which are helping this time around, from how to best treat patients to keep them off ventilators, to bringing in additional staff to give doctors and nurses a much needed break.

“They’re getting fatigued,” Silka said, “but we are doing our best to make sure that everybody’s getting the rest they need in between their shifts and their days off.”

Over the weekend, the county put tough new restrictions in place in the hopes of slowing the surge. A 14-day quarantine on travelers returning from trips of more than 150 miles, a ban on contact sports that has forced the 49ers to play home games in Arizona and strict limits on the number of shoppers allowed inside stores.

Cody urged local residents to do even more voluntarily.

“We urge everyone to stay home to the greatest extent that you can,” she said at a Saturday news conference. “Please stay home. Do not go out unless it is for essential reasons.”

The number of patients being treated in county hospitals for COVID-19 has doubled since Nov. 12.

“This pandemic is like a high-speed train,” Cody warned. “Our projections tell us that we are on target to derail by around the third week of December if we don’t apply brakes right now with all our collective might.”

Statewide, hospitalizations from COVID-19 have increased nearly 90% and could triple by Christmas.

“The red flags are flying in terms of the trajectory in our projections of growth,” said Gov. Gavin Newsom at Monday news conference.

The number of COVID-19 cases reported each day in California has been setting records, with the average daily case rate over the last week topping 14,000.