

BREAKING NEWS

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CALIFORNIA

California's first two cases of coronavirus are confirmed in L.A. and Orange counties



(Chung Sung-Jun / Getty Images)

One patient is in good condition and is in isolation at a hospital, Orange County health officials said

By ALEX WIGGLESWORTH, RONG-GONG LIN II, SONALI KOHLI

JAN. 26, 2020
2:49 PM



Health officials have confirmed the first two cases of the new strain of coronavirus in Los Angeles and Orange counties, brought by travelers who came from the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, China.

In both counties, the virus infecting the two individuals was the same strain as the one that had [spread to more than 2,000 people](#) in 14 countries and territories and caused 56 deaths since it was discovered late last month in central China. Two other cases have been diagnosed in the U.S., one in Washington state and one in Chicago.



The San Diego Union-Tribune

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In L.A. County, the infected person was a returning traveler from Wuhan who is receiving medical treatment at a local hospital, officials said.

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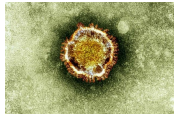
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The Orange County patient is in good condition and is in isolation at a hospital, health officials said. In both counties, health authorities are following up with anyone who has had close contact with the patients, but they noted that casual contact with an infected person — such as visiting the same grocery store or movie theater — only carries “minimal risk of developing infection,” officials said.

“The risk of local transmission remains low,” officials said.

The L.A. County patient is a Wuhan resident who was flying through LAX on Jan. 22 his way back to China, L.A. County public health officials said during a news conference Sunday. “The infected person presented themselves immediately for care at LAX airport once they noticed they weren’t feeling well,” said L.A. County Dept of Public Health director Dr. Barbara Ferrer. The patient

was transported from LAX directly to a local hospital and “this case poses no immediate threat to the general public,” she said. No L.A. County residents were infected or at risk as of Sunday morning, Ferrer said.



SCIENCE

The coronavirus from China is new, and that makes everything dicier

Jan. 25, 2020

The new strain of coronavirus, known as 2019-nCoV, can cause respiratory illness and pneumonia. It was originally thought to be spreading from only animals to people in central China, but there are now indications it is also spreading among people.



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In people who are young and healthy, the virus does not seem to cause severe illness, with symptoms including fever, coughing and shortness of breath. Most of the dozens of deaths tied to the coronavirus to date have been in the central Chinese province of Hubei, of which Wuhan is the capital.

Most of the dead were at least 50 years old with underlying medical problems or weakened immune systems, Chinese officials said. But a 36-year-old man [succumbed to the coronavirus last week](#), and a healthcare worker also was reported to be among fatalities.



SCIENCE

Should you panic about the coronavirus from China? Here's what the experts say

Jan. 24, 2020

Health experts in the United States have said there's no evidence to suggest the [new coronavirus is any more virulent](#) than the flu.

“We don’t have evidence yet to suggest this is any more virulent than the flu you see in the U.S. each year,” Michael Mina, an epidemiology researcher at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said last week. “Most people, with proper medical attention, will do just fine.”

But because [this strain of coronavirus is new](#), health officials are on high alert, and researchers will have to start from square one in creating a vaccine, which will probably take years to develop.

Coronaviruses include a large variety of viruses — the common cold as well as those that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). SARS and MERS sickened thousands of people around the world and caused hundreds of deaths.



Chinese President Xi Jinping calls situation serious as China scrambles to contain virus

Jan. 25, 2020

As of Friday, 18 people between the ages of 3 and 58 had been tested for the virus in California, according to the state Department of Public Health. They included a traveler who arrived at Los Angeles International Airport on a flight from Mexico City and was taken to a hospital early Thursday for an evaluation.

L.A. County public health officials could not confirm whether the Mexico City traveler was the same one with the virus. Healthcare workers who treat anyone with this kind of infectious disease should make sure they wash their hands after contact and consider wearing protective eye gear, officials said.

“We’re working very closely with LAX, we have staff stationed at the quarantine station,” said Dr. Sharon Balter, director of the L.A. County public health department’s Acute Communicable Disease Control Program. “All travelers who are arriving from China are being screened ... [LAX officials] call us immediately if they think anybody needs to be tested and then they work with our staff ... to get them to a hospital that’s appropriate to test them, and everything went as one would expect in this case.”

Coronavirus cases

There have been 2,116 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus and 56 deaths worldwide as of early Sunday.

| | Confirmed cases | Deaths |
|---------|-----------------|--------|
| Jan. 22 | 555 0 | |
| Jan. 23 | 653 18 | |
| Jan. 24 | 941 26 | |
| Jan. 25 | 2,019 56 | |
| Jan. 26 | 2,116 56 | |

Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Sonia Angell, director of the California Department of Public Health, said in a statement Sunday that the immediate health risk to the general public in California is low, but “the California Department of Public Health has been preparing for this situation by working closely with local health departments and health care providers.”

Besides the cases in Los Angeles and Orange counties, only two other people have tested positive for the virus in the United States — a man in Washington state and a woman in Illinois.

Though the U.S. has not seen a major outbreak, the virus has spread widely across Asia in the last month.

Should you panic about the coronavirus from China? Here's what the experts say

Jan. 24, 2020

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China's health minister said the country was entering a "crucial stage" as "it seems like the ability of the virus to spread is getting stronger."

The pneumonia-like illnesses from the [newly identified coronavirus](#) first appeared last month in Wuhan, an industrial and transportation hub in central China's Hubei province. Other cases have been reported in Japan, South Korea and Thailand. Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong reported their first cases Thursday.

The U.S. State Department [announced Sunday morning](#) that it will relocate personnel at the U.S. Consulate General in Wuhan to the U.S. via a single flight on Tuesday from Wuhan to San Francisco. There is limited space for private American citizens on the flight, officials said. "Capacity is extremely limited; priority will be given to individuals at greater risk from coronavirus," the State Department said in a news statement.

Chinese travel agencies have been told to halt all group tours, the state-owned English-language China Daily newspaper reported, citing the China Assn. of Travel Services.

Canada reported its first case Saturday in Toronto, the AP reported. Officials said the man is in his 50s and recently flew from Wuhan to Guangzhou, China, and then on to Toronto on Thursday.

The first coronavirus cases in Europe have also been confirmed, with three patients being treated in French hospitals. All three had recently traveled to China; they were reportedly doing well, according to officials.

Last week, federal authorities announced that passengers flying from Wuhan into LAX, San Francisco International Airport and John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York [would be examined for the virus' symptoms](#).

Word of the new strain of coronavirus has affected California's travel agencies at a time when they [typically do a brisk business](#).

"Today is the first day of the Chinese New Year, but no one is here to go back to China," Albert Eng, owner of Chosen Travel in Monterey Park, said Saturday morning. "Usually we are very busy, but this year, no way."

He estimates business has been down about 95% since fears over the virus hit. He said that in years past, he'd have at least 40 clients taking trips to China during the week preceding the Lunar New Year. This week, he had five.

"Right now, I ... think even if the tickets were free of charge, no one would take it," he said.

Times staff writers Emily Baumgaertner and Cindy Chang contributed to this report. The AP was used in compiling this report.

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A U.S. State Department official has told The Associated Press that a chartered plane sent to China to pick up Americans in the city of Wuhan has departed and is en route to the U.S. Wuhan is the epicenter of a new virus that has sickened thousands and killed more than 100

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