

Georgia ramps up COVID-19 testing but labs face backups with additional samples

Georgia reached its lowest number of COVID-19 positive patients hospitalized since hospitals began reporting data to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency on April 8.

The state has seen a roughly 12 percent decrease over the last week, going from 1,125 to 986 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, and a 34 percent decrease from the 1,500 patients hospitalized on May 1. A total of 7,027 hospitalizations have occurred since Georgia began reporting data on April 8.

Numbers in Dougherty County, the state's worst-hit region, have steadily leveled out over the past week, with a total of 1,667 confirmed cases, 384 hospitalizations and 139 deaths.

"Our hospitalization numbers continue to show encouraging signs in our fight against COVID-19, but we must remain vigilant in our efforts to combat this virus," said Georgia Governor Brian Kemp.


He added, "I continue to ask Georgians to practice social distancing, follow the advice of public health officials, and protect the elderly and medically fragile."

Testing has ramped up the past couple of weeks. Last Friday, Kemp announced that Georgia ranked 22nd out of 54 state and territories on the current percentage of total population tested, a huge leap from 46th a month ago.

Georgia has administered 378,156 total tests, almost 3.5 percent of the state's total population.

Any Georgian can now be tested for COVID-19. As the state continues to ramp up testing, the number of positive cases may rise. However, the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests is now at 10.5%, down from 16% two weeks ago, the Governor's Office reported.

"Our focus on increased testing is yielding strong results as the Georgia National Guard, Georgia Department of Public Health, and various public and private-sector partners continue to work non-stop to improve access to COVID-19 testing for Georgians," said Kemp. "We are working tirelessly to move the needle on testing as we take measured steps to safely reopen the Peach State."



Georgia-Pacific

Georgia-Pacific's Cedar Springs plant to temporarily idle one of its three machines

Georgia-Pacific's Cedar Springs operations will temporarily idle one of its three paper machines for two separate week-long periods in late May and late June due to lack of demand, according to Public Affairs Manager Peggy Jaye.

"Based on current economic conditions, we've determined that production of medium paper on Cedar Springs' #3 machine (PM3) significantly exceeds current and predicted short-term demand," Jaye stated. The local plant produces containerboard, which is used in the manufacture of packaging boxes.

As a result, production on PM3 will be temporarily curtailed for seven days starting on Thursday, May 21. Also, beginning on Sunday, June 21 at 8 a.m., additional downtime on PM3 is planned for seven days.

Unfortunately, a significant number of hourly employees will be temporarily laid off or furloughed during the downtime, she said. Those affected include personnel from areas across the mill that support the temporarily idled machine.

"Be assured that this was a very difficult decision to make and we understand the concern and anxiety it may cause our employees, their families and our community," Jaye said.

Cedar Springs' two linerboard machines are not impacted. "In the meantime, we continue to operate, closely following public health guidelines to protect the health of our employees and our work environment against COVID-19."

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