State, Federal Health Officials Prepare as Fall COVID-19 Surge Begins
The state Department of Health announced steps it has taken, with the support of the federal government, to prepare for a fall surge of COVID-19. Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine stated that based on current trends both in Pennsylvania and across the nation, particularly the upper Midwest, that it appears that the surge has begun.

Pennsylvania has reported nine straight days of more than 1,000 daily cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 have nearly doubled from 400 to more than 750 patients in the last month. With that said, there is still significant healthcare capacity available with 21 percent of ICU and 19 percent of hospital beds statewide remaining available and COVID-19 hospitalizations are far lower than the more than 3,000 patients at the height of the April wave.

State and national officials believe that the spread is occurring due to small family gatherings where participants let down their guard and do not wear masks or social distance. Levine said that the case increases are no longer just college age, but also those in their 30s, 40s, and older.

Levine noted that Pennsylvania is in a much better position than in the spring because of testing availability, contact tracing resources, a better prepared healthcare system, and a stockpile of PPE. She emphasized that there are no plans at this time to change any of the mitigation orders that are in place and no plans to impose any further restrictions.

The Department is enhancing its contact tracing efforts by implementing a contact tracing management system. The Department has prepared a plan, based on a federal playbook, for distribution of a vaccine once it becomes available. The plan will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control this week for review. The CDC released updated FAQs about the development of COVID-19 vaccines and what the Trump Administration is doing to fund vaccine development and how it will be distributed.

Both state and federal officials are strongly encouraging Pennsylvanians to get a flu shot, preferably by the end of October for the greatest effectiveness. Some are concerned that increasing flu and COVID-19 cases at the same time could overwhelm the healthcare system. Flu vaccines can decrease the chances of getting sick by 40-60 percent and decrease the seriousness of illness by 50-75 percent. Influenza infection rates and trends for Pennsylvania will be posted each Tuesday. For more on the efforts to prepare for the surge, click here.

3.8 Million Rapid Tests to PA
Federal officials are advocating increased testing to catch and stop the silent spread of COVID-19 before the increased hospitalizations and deaths that follow. To support this effort, the U.S. government is providing states and vulnerable communities, including nursing homes and assisted living facilities, with rapid point-of-care COVID-19 tests. Pennsylvania will receive over 3.8 million tests by the end of the year and has already received its first shipments of more
than 250,000, which are expected to continue weekly through the end of the year. These tests can deliver results within 15 minutes without lab equipment. The first tests will be distributed to authorized locations in counties with recent high incidence rates, including Bradford, Centre, Lebanon, Montour, Northumberland, Schuylkill, and Snyder Counties.

**Traffic And Liquor Violations Up**
Pennsylvania State Police released monthly traffic enforcement statistics for September. For several months during and after the shutdown, total citations and warnings from 2019 were far higher, often several times in magnitude, compared to the same month in 2020. September marks the first month since February 2020 where total traffic citations and warnings for a month in 2020 were higher for the month than in 2019. In fact, total warnings increased 47% from September 2019 to September 2020. Total citations were also up 66% from September 2019 compared to September 2020. In addition, total warnings increased by 47% from August 2020 to September 2020 and total warnings increased by 28% from August 2020 to September 2020. To view the statistics, [click here](#).

In addition, PSP liquor control enforcement officers visited 658 licensed liquor establishments from Wednesday, October 7, through Monday, October 12, to ensure that businesses are abiding by COVID-19 mitigation requirements that include social distancing, masking, and other health and safety requirements of the Liquor Code.

Officers issued 76 warnings and 25 violations for failing to follow COVID-19 requirements during this time frame. That brings the total violation count to 205 over the last 104 days (*about 2 per day statewide*). To view a summary of the number of checks and warnings issued by enforcement officers since July 1, [click here](#) and scroll down.