

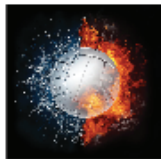
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“Trust that in living true to yourself, you will attract people that support and love you, just as you are.”

-Jaeda deWalt



GDILIVE.COM



Girls Volleyball: Groton Area vs. Webster Area

Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m.: Varsity Match Sponsors

Hefty Seed/Justin Hanson ~ Patios Plus

Doug & Wanda Hamilton ~ Sign Gypsies

Simulcasting locally on 89.3 FM

[Click here for the program](#)



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Great catches!



Jaimen Farrell made this catch from Lane Tietz and then turned around, broke a couple of tackles and scored on an 86-yard pass play. This gave Groton Area a 7-0 lead after Jackson Cogley kicked the PAT with 7:35 left in the first quarter.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jackson Cogley made this catch near the end zone and then dashed in for a 26 yard pass play from Lane Tietz. This gave Groton Area a 21-0 lead after Jackson Cogley kicked the PAT. This was the last play of the first quarter.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jordan Bjerke made this catch right in front of him and hung on to the ball while being chased to the end zone. This was a 65-yard pass play from Lane Tietz with 10:54 left in the third quarter and it gave Groton Area a 41-0 lead after Jackson Cogley kicked the PAT.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Area goes 2-1 with win over Webster Area

Groton Area scored seven touchdowns en route to a 47-0 win over Webster Area on Friday. The game was played in Groton and was sponsored by Woodsy's Place with Bahr Spray Foam being the touchdown sponsor.

Groton Area's first possession lasted one whole play as the Tigers fumbled the ball on the first play. But Webster's first two possession were four attempts and a punt. Groton Area's next drive started on its own 18 yard line. On third and 13, Jaimen Farrell caught a pass from Lane Tietz and dashed down the field for an 86 yard pass play to score. Jackson Cogley kicked the PAT and it was 7-0 with 7:35 left in the first quarter.

Webster got its first first-down on the next drive thanks to a Groton Area penalty, but ended up punting on fourth and 25.

Groton Area would start its next drive at Webster Area's 46 yard line. The Tigers got two first downs before Farrell would score on a six-yard run with 2:37 left in the first quarter. Cogley kicked the PAT and it was 14-0.

Webster Area would punt on fourth and nine and the Tigers had the ball at

the Webster Area 42 yard line with 61 seconds left in the first quarter. Groton Area got a first down. The Tigers snapped the ball just before time expired and Cogley caught a pass from Lane Tietz for a 26-yard pass play. Cogley kicked the PAT and it was 21-0 at the end of the first quarter.

Webster Area had possession of the ball to start the second quarter. The Bearcats had four first-downs on that drive and was down to the Groton Area 20 yard line before fumbling the ball that was recovered by Paxton Bonn who returned to the 45 yard line. Webster Area had the ball for 5:30 on that drive.

Groton Area needed about three minutes and one first down before Farrell would score on a 28-yard run with 3:12 left in the half. Cogley kicked the PAT and it was 28-0.

Webster Area would have the ball for about two minutes before having to give up the ball. Groton Area had the ball with 1:36 left in the half at the Webster Area 25 yard line. On the next play, Favian Sanchez would score on a 25 yard pass play from Lane Tietz. The PAT kick was no good and it was 34-0 with 1:27 left in the half.

In the remaining 78 seconds of the half, Webster had four plays, Groton Area had four plays and Webster Area had one more. It was 34-0 at half time.

Groton Area had the ball first in the third quarter. A Pierce Kettering touchdown was recalled due to a penalty, but then Jordan Bjerke had a 65-yard pass play from Lane Tietz to score. Cogley kicked the PAT and it was 41-0. The continuous clock then began as the score had reached 35 points.

Webster Area had the ball for about seven minutes. It converted on fourth and 10 to get a first down,



The teams walked past each other congratulating each other without the hand shakes, but some did helmet bumping. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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but was unable to do it a second time. Groton Area had the ball for the rest of the third quarter, starting at the Webster Area 49 yard line. That drive extended into the fourth quarter, culminating with a Tate Larson touchdown on a 16-yard pass play from Jacob Lewandowski. The PAT run was no good and it was 47-0 with 11:15 to go in the game. After that, it was basically the younger players taking the field and the score remained at 47-0.

Gorton Area had 12 first downs, had 24 carries for 132 yards and two touchdowns. Jaimen Farrell had six carries for 62 yards, Pierce Kettering had six for 38 yards, Jacob Lewandowski had seven for 30 yards, Favian Sanchez had one for six yards and Lane Tietz had one for two yards.

In passing, Lane Tietz completed five of 10 passes for 212 yards and three touchdowns. Jacob Lewandowski completed two of two passes for 39 yards

and one touchdown. Receivers were Jaimen Farrell with one catch for 86 yards, Jordan Bjerke had two for 75 yards, Tate Larson had two for 39 yards, Fvian Sanchez had one for 25 yards and Jackson Cogley had one for 24 yards. Groton Area had four fumbles and lost one and seven penalties for 70 yards.

Defensive leaders were Jaimen Farrell with seven tackles, Favian Sanchez had seven tackles and one interception, Alex Morris had six tackles, Colby Dunker had six tackles, Tate Larson had five tackles and two sacks, Jacob Lewandowski had five tackles, Paxton Bonn had two sacks and a fumble recovery, Evan Nehls had two sacks and having one sack each were Caleb Furney, Ethan Gengerke and Kale Pharis.

Webster Area had nine first downs and carried the ball 28 times with a minus 53 yards. Jacob Pereboom completed 13 of 23 passes for 91 yards and Brent Bearman attempted one pass. Pass receivers were Brent Bearman with five catches for 36 yards and Colby Toerence with two catches for 24 yards. Webster Area had six fumbles and lost one and had two penalties for 10 yards. Carson Mount led the defense with six tackles while Brent Bearman, Andy Johnson and Ethan Opitz with five each and Colby Torrence and Brent Snaza with four each.

Groton Area, now 2-1, will travel to Sisseton on Friday. Webster Area, now 0-3, will have this week off.

- Paul Kosel



Tom Woods (left) has been keeping stats for the Groton Area football teams for 34 years. He has become a staple for halftime stats on GDILIVE.COM. In addition, Woodsy's Place was a sponsor of the Webster game on GDLIVE.COM. He is being interviewed by Paul Kosel. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

Injury reflects like mother, like son



Kaden Kurtz talks with Paul Kosel at half-time on GDILIVE.COM. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

"It's kind of eerie," said Kaden Kurtz during an interview on GDILIVE.COM on Friday. There are several parallelisms between Kaden's knee injury and that of his mom's 33 years ago.

"It was 33 years ago when I blew out my knee and mom did it to hers playing basketball."

Kurtz suffered his knee injury on August 28, 2020, while playing football against Ellendale-Edgely-Kulm. His mom, Diane (Dohman) Kurtz suffered her injury on Sept. 5, 1987 while playing basketball against Aberdeen Roncalli. Both injured their left knees.

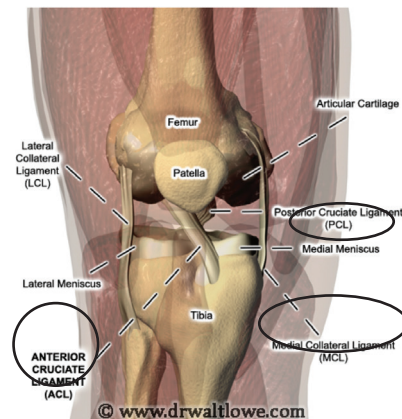
Kaden described what happened to him: "I had two options. I would spin around and fake it to the running back. I had an option to throw it to Jaimen Farrell or to Jackson Cogley. I should have thrown it to Cogley and I ran it instead toward the north-

east got a shoulder pad to the side of the knee and I rolled over the top of him and my leg got caught up a little bit. I tore my ACL, MCL and meniscus."

Kaden will be in recovery mode for nine months and will undergo surgery on Wednesday.

"I'm hoping to have a positive experience from an unfortunate event."

- Paul Kosel



Dohman, Jensen injured

Diane Dohman, Groton, and Julie Jensen, Langford, were two basketball players that were injured last week.

Dohman suffered torn ligaments and cartilage in her knees during the Aberdeen Roncalli girls' basketball game Saturday in Aberdeen. She was taken to St. Luke's Hospital where she underwent eight hours of surgery Sunday.

Dohman, a senior this year, will be unable to play basketball this year and her participation in track also looks doubtful.

Meanwhile Jensen, a freshman at Langford High School, was much luckier in her injury.

Jensen suffered a sprained ankle last Wednesday during practice. Coach Byron Utter said, "She suffered a pretty good injury." He said she is a possible starter and should be back in about two weeks.

From the Sept. 9, 1987 issue of Groton Regional Independent.

#197 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

As expected, the numbers are quite small today; we knew testing sites would be shut down for the long weekend, and we see a correspondingly low number of reports coming in. I would not mind, however, if this turned out to be the start of something great. There were just 25,300 new case reports today; I can't remember the last time we were below 30,000; I'm thinking it would have been late May or early June. But, as I mentioned above, I do not think we can trust this is real; and I expect, starting tomorrow, we're going to see a combination of increased results delayed by the weekend coming in and low numbers coming in due to so few weekend tests, so who knows where that will leave us? This may take some time to sort itself out. We should have a better sense of things by next week. We're really going to have to focus on longer-term trends for a while now—which isn't a bad idea anyhow. Today was a 0.4% increase to 6,316,300. There were just 249 deaths reported today, a 0.1% increase to 189,037. I expect these were weekend-delayed too; that is usual. I wouldn't be surprised to see a large number tomorrow or Wednesday before things settle down in this area.

I've been reading about the complexities of distributing a vaccine for Covid-19 when one is approved—not the details of who's first or second in line to receive it, but the logistics of actually delivering it to the folks who'll be giving it to those people. Most of that deals with the details of the particular vaccine candidates in the pipeline at the moment. Tinglong Dai, professor of operations management at the Johns Hopkins University, says, "It's just incredible. I think the vaccine supply chain is one of the most mind-bogglingly complex supply chains ever built." So distribution is always challenging, but it appears the particular vaccines in the pipeline at the moment are adding significantly to the challenge this time around. Distribution will be under the operational control of the CDC, which has decades of vaccine-distribution experience under its belt.

The additional challenges this time around have to do with the fact that the vaccine candidates in phase 3 trials in the US right now require two shots for effectiveness, so everything has to be done twice and on a particular schedule, and the fact that two of the candidates have very particular scheduling and storage requirements.

Moderna's must be stored at -4 degrees Fahrenheit and doesn't contain any preservatives, which means a short shelf-life once it's thawed. It's shipped on dry ice and can be stored in a sufficiently-cold freezer or in the shipping container if you keep topping off the dry ice. It will keep up to two weeks in a refrigerator and only six hours at room temperature. It comes in a multi-dose vial, and once that vial is entered for the first dose, must be used within six hours or discarded. With the supplies as short as they're going to be, this will require careful planning and scheduling of patients to assure none goes to waste. A second dose is given 28 days after the first, so this whole logistical operation needs to happen twice and on schedule. For the record, if you have a first dose of Vaccine A, your second dose must also be Vaccine A; you can't substitute Vaccine B for that second dose. That means keeping track of who received what, as well as getting them all back for the second dose.

The Pfizer candidate is more challenging because it requires storage at -94 degrees Fahrenheit; there aren't that many freezers lying around in the average clinic that are equipped to maintain such temperatures. One thing that's happening now is to make a determination how many of them are out there and where they are because they're going to have to ship to those locations and then figure out distribution from there. (There are some tests underway to discover whether this requirement can be relaxed, but in the meanwhile, we have to make plans for what we have.) This one needs a special shipping container, also using dry ice (a lot of it, I'd guess). The ice must be topped off every few days to maintain tempera-

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ture. This one can also be refrigerated for a shorter time—up to 48 hours—and also comes in multi-dose vials which can be held at room temperature for only six hours; it is diluted before administration and must be used or discarded within six hours after the final mixing step. Second dose for this one is 21 days after the first. This one will be shipped only in large volumes and, given its particular temperature requirements, can probably only be shipped to a relatively small number of centralized locations with the capacity to store it and to vaccinate large numbers of people. I would guess teams would have to fan out from those locations with smaller supplies kept at refrigeration temperatures for sort of SWAT-team-style immunization clinics in outlying locations.

Getting either one of these vaccines used within the time guidelines will be complicated by all of the precautions we're having to take these days to prevent the spread of Covid-19 at any place where people gather—and precautions to avoid people gathering at all. You can't just line people up somewhere and run them through as we have done with other vaccination efforts in the past. But it would be a shame, wouldn't it, to catch Covid-19 at the place where you received a vaccine to prevent getting Covid-19? And be assured, if you were exposed on the day you received the vaccine, the vaccine's not going to be a help; remember that the idea behind a vaccine is to give your immune system a head start.

To put another kink in the works, I also have just read that we're in something of a dry ice crisis these days. Demand is very high, largely because all-out vaccine research efforts are calling for huge supplies, and also because so many people are taking food delivery at distances which require dry ice for shipping. It is apparently difficult to source more at this time too. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide, and the carbon dioxide from which it is made is generally acquired as a by-product of the ethanol production process, something that's slowed down because we are driving less, which slows demand for, and therefore production of, ethanol.

Suppliers of dry ice are running out of ice before they run out of orders pretty much every day. A supplier in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said, "I can't get ahead. I've been doing this for 42 years and I've never seen it like this, ever. The demand on dry ice is so high around the country that people have been calling us from Chicago, Seattle, Texas, Wyoming." Suppliers report they cannot get their entire order of carbon dioxide each day. The whole problem is exacerbated by the slowdown in rail shipments associated with the pandemic; this means the carbon dioxide that is available is taking longer to arrive at dry ice production facilities. This is sort of a perfect storm, just when we're in the middle of a tornado of trouble anyway.

There is a chance things will ease before we need to start shipping vaccines around. More ethanol plants are due back online over the next month or so. Food delivery services will need less dry ice when temperatures drop. And people drink less soda in the winter—those bubbles in the drinks are carbon dioxide—so that source of demand should let up. We can also hope rail service picks up; I don't know how likely that is because I'm not really sure what caused the slowdown in the first place. Not everyone is convinced that will solve the problem, so we're going to have to wait and see, I guess. It is difficult to say how all of this will play into the kind of increased demand created by a massive effort to distribute vaccine, but it's a concern.

Some other of the vaccines store better under refrigeration, and there's one I've heard stores well at room temperature. That should help if those are approved, but I believe all of those are not as close to approval as these cold-storage-requiring ones are. Another factor to consider is that it may be one vaccine or another is shown to work best with certain populations—the elderly, for example. If so, it is possible more than one vaccine will need to be shipped to each location. One more thing to consider is a tracking system for recipients. It seems likely many folks who line up (however that is arranged, given distancing precautions) for a first dose will fail to note or remember which vaccine they received and may also require

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reminders for their second doses; so there is a need to devise a system for keeping that straight as well.

Turns out we're not done preparing for a vaccine when we finally figure out who should receive it first; there's a whole bunch of other stuff that needs to be worked out before the moment arrives—stuff I'm guessing most of us have never thought much about. No wonder we need to start distribution planning now. Word on the street is the CDC has just the experts we need to sort this out and they're hard at work on the details already. That's a good thing.

I've been hearing some concern around the vaccine approval process, and you'd have to be dead not to realize the whole issue has become highly politicized. I'm going to, as usual here, steer clear of policy and political discussions and explain how these trials are being conducted in terms of process so that those with concerns know what to look out for as an approval approaches.

First thing to know is that these phase 3 trials are conducted by what's called a double-blind process. This means half of the 30,000 volunteers in a particular trial are receiving two doses of the vaccine candidate and the others are receiving two doses of a placebo—an inactive, no-vaccine-containing injection of sterile saline, which has no immunogenic properties at all. Double-blind means neither the patients nor the researchers know which is which, whether a given patient is receiving vaccine or placebo. The drug companies don't know either; they won't even see their data first.

So once they have their volunteers fully immunized—both doses—they sit around and wait. Researchers check in with volunteers at prescribed intervals and keep track of who gets Covid-19; but they have no idea whether these sick people received the vaccine or not. They gather all these data and hand them off, also at prescribed times (usually after a certain number of volunteers get sick), to an independent group of experts assembled by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) called the Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB). I want to be clear that the members of the DSMB are employed by neither the pharmaceutical company nor the government; they are scientists who are not dependent for their livelihoods on these players. They are the only ones allowed to see the assembled data, and they are also the only ones who have access to the coding that shows which people received vaccine and which received placebo; but they can do so only according to the trial protocol. So when we hit the magic number of sick people, the DSMB will gain access to this information and evaluate.

These check-in points for the DSMB are prescribed in advance; for example, the Moderna DSMB will have its first look (called an interim analysis) when 53 subjects get sick, its second when 106 get sick, and another at 153. The point is these numbers are set up in advance and the researchers are blinded so that it is impossible for them to get overexcited and declare their vaccine a success because their hopes are so high (or their eagerness to be first across the finish line so overwhelming) that they misinterpret the data. They don't get to interpret the data and, in fact, don't have the necessary information to do so, even if they wanted to.

Only when the DSMB determines a vaccine appears to be protective does anyone else get to see the data. Next up are members of an FDA advisory committee, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. These folks are mostly independent infectious disease specialists who are also neither pharmaceutical company nor government employees. If they like what they see, they make a recommendation to the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. It's apparently pretty standard for the Center to agree with the Advisory Committee and forward a recommendation to the FDA commissioner, who is Dr. Stephen Hahn.

This is the first point at which political pressure, if there's going to be any, could become a factor. Hahn is a government employee who depends for his job on his boss, the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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It has happened—not often—that a commissioner has gone against the recommendations he or she has received. Hahn, aware of the speculation about a possible pressure campaign by his boss, has pledged that the data on which any decision is based will be made publicly available. Presuming he keeps his word on that (and I have zero reason to suspect he will not), then vaccinologists across the country will be all over those data, making their own independent assessments. I may be naïve about the way things work, but it is my thought at the moment that, if this process is followed and there is transparency about the trial data, we will be able to trust that a vaccine receiving final, full approval will be worthy of it.

This leaves the matter of an emergency use authorization (EUA), which requires much less evidentiary support, prior to a full approval. This is a step the commissioner can take upon request from the pharmaceutical company, and there's really no way average citizens will be able to evaluate for ourselves whether it is appropriate in a given circumstance. That's when I'm going to rely on those independent scientists across the country to interpret the data and inform us whether that was foolhardy or appropriate.

It is also possible for Dr. Hahn to be overruled, but that would be extraordinary and would almost certainly cause a number of folks to throw up red flags, which would warn doctors across the country to advise their patients against receiving the vaccine in question. So yes, things can go wrong; but I think it's too soon to freak out about this. Let's see how this thing plays out.

I get asked from time to time by people who are convinced they have already had Covid-19 whether they should get tested to determine whether that is, indeed, what they had back in March or May or July when they were so sick. My answer is don't waste your money. Here's why: The tests aren't all that reliable yet and, even if they were, no one can really tell you what the results mean. Let me explain.

First, the test that would be needed is a test for antibody to the virus. This requires a blood specimen; those tests with the swabs are diagnostic tests—to see whether you are infected now—and won't tell you a thing about March or May or July. Your blood is tested for the presence of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. The process for doing this is not new technology; this sort of testing has been done for a variety of kinds of antibodies for decades.

The problem with these particular antibody tests is that they are not very specific, that is, they can be positive when you don't really have these antibodies, a so-called false positive, because they are actually picking up antibodies against other viruses instead. There are a few possible reasons this could happen, but the bottom line is, for many/most of the tests now on the market, they can be wrong considerably more than half the time when they say you have the antibodies. Those aren't very good odds. (If you're wondering how this squares with claims the tests are 90+% accurate (which are not a lie), I'll direct you to my Update #82 posted May 15, <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3596272713722442>, which shows you how this can be so, if you care to review.) Another issue is that antibody that is detectable (except with a highly sophisticated test intended for research purposes) seems to decline rapidly in many/most folks within several weeks after infection.

Additionally, experts aren't really sure what having detectable levels of antibody actually means. We have not yet collected evidence having antibody is protective. We think it is, but we don't know. It's going to take more time to sort all of that out.

So if your antibody test comes back positive, it's possible—in fact, quite possible—you don't really have the antibodies after all; if it comes back negative, it's possible you really were infected in the past and just lost the antibodies before you had the test; and even if you do really have the antibodies, no one knows what that means. These tests can be useful as a research tool to examine populations to get an idea what percentage of a population might have been infected because large sample effects can wash out some of

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the uncertainty inherent in any individual result; but on an individual level, they're a waste of your \$150. Additionally, a positive result might cause you to feel sort of bullet-proof and start living dangerously. Be a jolt to have to learn this lesson the hard way. Save your money.

Basirat Olamide Ajayi is a math teacher in Lagos, Nigeria. When the schools in Nigeria shut down due to the pandemic, 12th-grade students worried about how they would prepare for the final exams they need to pass in order to graduate. Ajayi had a solution. Several months ago, she started teaching free mathematics classes online via Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. She says, "COVID is here with both negative and positive impacts. The positive impact is that we can use technology to teach our students, which I am very, very happy about."

Apparently she's really good at her job. "One student said, "Originally when I started learning differentiation on my own it was kind of twitchy. But when I joined the online maths platform, I started slow at first, but with the way my maths teacher was teaching, holding the sessions, I started learning differentiation rapidly."

She started out solving problems on camera on white sheets of paper, but then a parent donated a whiteboard, which has made things easier for her. She has persevered through difficulties: students who don't have access to cellular data (which she has solved for some of them by sending money) and others who don't have phones (so she has encouraged parents to share their phones). About that, Ajayi says, "Some of them don't even have data to access the class, and that is not giving me joy at all, as a teacher who wants students to be online." The chairman of the Lagos arm of the Nigerian Union of Teachers has said her dedication is noteworthy. And he's not kidding.

Ajayi offers a short lesson and then assigns homework. The students send her the homework, and she grades it. All of it. Cool: That's what teachers do. Except this teacher now has over 1800 students across Nigeria and even internationally. She recently received a request from Canada. "Sometimes, I stay awake till 2 a.m. going through their assignments." Sheesh!

This woman is not receiving resources to support these classes, she is paying for her own Internet access, and she is providing her own teaching materials. She misses being in the classroom, but says she is gratified to be helping so many students. "The more I give, the more society will benefit from me and people can say, 'Mrs. Ajayi has done this to the whole world.'"

I wish she really could do this to the whole world. Think what a world that would be. Maybe we can all sign up to be Mrs. Ajayi's little helpers so she really can do "this" to the whole world. Let's give that a shot.

Be well. We'll talk again.

Masks now recommended, not required

The Groton Area School Board reviewed its newly implement policy on requiring face coverings at indoor events. Shawn Gengerke was one of those speaking in favor of recommending instead of requiring. The board noted that those attending the volleyball match wore masks at the beginning of the event, but by the end of the event, 95 percent were not wearing masks. Superintendent Joe Schwan said he did not want to go down the road of having the police come in to escort out fans for trespassing; nor was there any good way to enforce the policy. So in the end, the board voted to alter its policy from requiring to wear face masks to recommending to wear face coverings.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31	Sept. 1
Minnesota	70,707	71,236	72,390	73,240	74,257	75,189	75,864
Nebraska	32,348	32,727	33,101	33,436	33,753	34,046	34,287
Montana	6,624	6,785	6,929	7,063	7,251	7340	7,421
Colorado	55,800	55,993	56,343	56,773	57041	57,223	57,424
Wyoming	3,089	3,135	3,166	3,196	3,210	3245	3264
North Dakota	10,229	10,467	10,800	11,109	11,484	11,702	11,816
South Dakota	11,505	11,571	12,194	12,517	12,942	13,322	13,509
United States	5,779,395	5,823,685	5,869,692	5,919,670	5,961,582	5,997,622	6,031,286
US Deaths	178,533	179,743	180,857	181,798	182,779	183,068	183,602
Minnesota	+409	+529	+1,154	+850	+1,017	+932	+607
Nebraska	+301	+379	+374	+335	+317	+293	+241
Montana	+135	+161	+144	+134	+188	+89	+81
Colorado	+459	+193	+350	+430	+268	+182	+201
Wyoming	+21	+46	+31	+30	+14	+35	+19
North Dakota	+229	+238	+333	+309	+375	+218	+114
South Dakota	80	+66	+623	+323	+425	+380	+187
United States	+41,339	+44,290	+46,007	+49,978	41,912	+36,040	+33,664
US Deaths	+1,504	+1,210	+1,114	+941	+981	+289	+534
	Sept. 2	Sept. 3	Sept. 4	Sept. 5	Sept. 6	Sept. 7	Sept. 8
Minnesota	76,355	77,085	78,123	78,966	79,880	80,587	81,225
Nebraska	34,574	34,995	35,469	35,661	35,805	35,886	35,975
Montana	7,509	7,691	7,871	8,018	8,164	8,264	8,316
Colorado	57,775	58,019	58,287	58,655	58,989	59,274	59,487
Wyoming	3,282	3,311	3,334		3,386	3,425	No Report
North Dakota	12,000	12,267	12,629	12,974	13,334	13,631	13,801
South Dakota	13,749	14,003	14,337	14,596	14,889	15,109	15,300
United States	6,073,121	6,115,098	6,151,101	6,210,699	6,246,162	6,277,902	6,299,169
US Deaths	184,644	185,752	186,606	187,874	188,540	188,942	189,166
Minnesota	+491	+730	+1,038	+843	+914	+707	+638
Nebraska	+287	+421	+474	+192	+144	+81	+89
Montana	+88	+182	+180	+147	+146	+100	+52
Colorado	+351	+244	+268	+368	+334	+285	+213
Wyoming	+18	+29	+23		+52	+39	
North Dakota	+184	+267	+362	+345	+360	+297	+170
South Dakota	+240	+254	+334	+259	+293	+220	+191
United States	+41,835	+41,977	+36,003	+59,598	+35,463	+31,740	+21,267
US Deaths	+1,042	+1,108	+854	+1,268	+666	+402	+224

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September 7th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Brown County and Brookings County have the highest positive cases in South Dakota today. They account for 36 percent of the cases in today's report. Brown County is leading with 37 cases and a 75.5 percent positivity rate (37 of the 49 tests administered were positive) and Brookings County has 32 cases. After that, Minnehaha County had 23 cases, Pennington County 18 and Clay County 13.

South Dakota has 191 positive cases with a 19.6 positivity rate. North Dakota has 171 cases and a positivity rate of 17.3 percent today. No deaths were recorded in the Dakotas today.

Locally, Brown County had 37 positive and 24 recovered cases with 182 active cases, Day had one positive case reassigned and three recovered leaving seven active cases, Edmunds had two positive cases and now has 11 active ones, no change in Marshall County who has two active cases, Spink had three positive and four recovered with 26 active cases.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +37 (829) Positivity Rate: 75.5%

Recovered: +24 (644)

Active Cases: +13 (182)

Total Tests: 49 (8,623)

Ever Hospitalized: +0 (30)

Deaths: 0 (3)

Percent Recovered: 77.7 (-0.6)

South Dakota:

Positive: +191 (15,300 total) Positivity Rates: 19.6%

Total Tests: 973 (208,823 total)

Hospitalized: +5 (1,084 total). 78 currently hospitalized (down 3 from yesterday)

Deaths: +0 (173 total)

Recovered: +317 (12,235 total)

Active Cases: -126 (2,892)

Percent Recovered: 78.0 +1.1

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 3% Covid, 48% Non-Covid, 50% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 5% Covid, 60% Non-Covid, 34% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 5% Covid, 14% Non-Covid, 81% Available

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Haakon): Aurora 42-42, Harding 2-2, Jackson 12-11-1, Miner 17-17, Sully 8-8.

The following is the breakdown by all counties. The number in parenthesis right after the county name represents the number of deaths in that county.

Aurora: Fully Recovered

Beadle (9): +1 positive, +1 recovered (18 active cases)

Bennett: 15 active cases

Bon Homme (1): +1 positive (17 active cases)

Brookings (1): +32 positive, +29 recovered (189 active cases)

Brown (3): +37 positive, +24 recovered (182 ac-

tive cases)

Brule: +1 recovered (16 active cases)

Buffalo (3): 5 active cases

Butte (1): +3 positive, +1 recovered (27 active cases)

Campbell: Fully Recovered

Charles Mix: +1 positive, +2 recovered (9 active cases)

Clark: +1 positive, +1 recovered (5 active cases)

Clay (3) +13 positive, +15 recovered (165 active cases)

Codington (2): +16 positive, +29 recovered (186

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active cases)

Corson: +3 recovered (11 active cases)
 Custer (1): +4 recovered (59 active case)
 Davison (2): +3 positive, +4 recovered (28 active cases)
 Day: -1 positive, +3 recovered (7 active cases)
 Deuel: +1 positive, +6 recovered (11 active cases)
 Dewey: 32 active cases
 Douglas: +1 recovered (9 active cases)
 Edmunds: +2 positive (11 active cases)
 Fall River (1): +2 positive, +1 recovered (37 active cases)
 Faulk (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)
 Grant: 17 active cases
 Gregory (1): +2 positive, +4 recovered (23 active cases)
 Haakon: +1 positive (1 active case)
 Hamlin: +1 positive, +4 recovered (19 active cases)
 Hand: +1 recovered (1 active case)
 Hanson: 4 active cases
 Harding: Fully Recovered
 Hughes (4): +1 positive, +4 recovered (21 active cases)
 Hutchinson (1): +3 recovered (17 active cases)
 Hyde: 4 active cases
 Jackson (1): Fully Recovered
 Jerauld (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 active cases)
 Jones: 3 active cases
 Kingsbury: +1 positive (4 active cases)
 Lake (6): +1 positive (16 active cases)
 Lawrence (4): +3 positive, +9 recovered (90 active cases)

Lincoln (2): +5 positive, +18 recovered (151 active cases)
 Lyman (3): +1 recovered (11 active cases)
 Marshall: 2 active cases
 McCook (1): +1 positive, +1 recovered (15 active cases)
 McPherson: +2 positive (4 active case)
 Meade (1): +4 positive, +17 recovered (117 active cases)
 Mellette: 1 active case
 Miner: Fully Recovered
 Minnehaha (70): +23 positive, +54 recovered (612 active cases)
 Moody: 18 active cases
 Oglala Lakota (2): +1 positive, +5 recovered (31 active cases)
 Pennington (33): +18 positive, +47 recovered (415 active cases)
 Perkins: +1 positive (13 active cases)
 Potter: +1 positive, +2 recovered (13 active cases)
 Roberts (1): +1 recovered (15 active cases)
 Sanborn: 4 active cases
 Spink: +3 positive, +4 recovered (26 active cases)
 Stanley: +1 positive, +1 recovered (1 active case)
 Sully: Fully Recovered
 Todd (5): 9 active cases
 Tripp: +2 positive (5 active cases)
 Turner: +2 recovered (23 active cases)
 Union (5): +3 recovered (38 active cases)
 Walworth: +2 recovered (17 active cases)
 Yankton (3): +5 positive, +7 recovered (68 active cases)
 Ziebach: 12 active cases

North Dakota Dept. of Health Report
 COVID-19 Daily Report, September 7:

- 2,404 tests (986)
- 13,801 positives (+171) 17.3%
- 11,080 recovered (+259)
- 156 deaths (+0)
- 2,565 active cases (-88)

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	496	0
10-19 years	1587	0
20-29 years	3854	2
30-39 years	2690	7
40-49 years	2081	7
50-59 years	2034	19
60-69 years	1279	30
70-79 years	610	27
80+ years	478	81

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	7643	87
Male	7466	86

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread
Aurora	42	42	450	0	None
Beadle	646	619	2077	9	Moderate
Bennett	33	18	582	0	Substantial
Bon Homme	59	41	1008	1	Moderate
Brookings	523	333	3664	1	Substantial
Brown	829	644	5832	3	Substantial
Brule	76	60	908	0	Substantial
Buffalo	112	104	686	3	Minimal
Butte	57	29	892	1	Substantial
Campbell	4	4	121	0	None
Charles Mix	125	116	1795	0	Minimal
Clark	23	18	453	0	Minimal
Clay	462	294	1934	3	Substantial
Codington	462	274	3769	2	Substantial
Corson	67	56	651	0	Substantial
Custer	138	78	850	1	Substantial
Davison	158	128	2837	2	Substantial
Day	43	36	787	0	Moderate
Deuel	54	44	541	0	Substantial
Dewey	93	61	2544	0	Substantial
Douglas	32	23	468	0	Moderate
Edmunds	39	28	490	0	Moderate
Fall River	67	29	1181	1	Substantial
Faulk	43	29	246	1	Substantial
Grant	51	34	885	0	Substantial
Gregory	39	15	527	1	Substantial
Haakon	7	6	310	0	Minimal
Hamlin	69	50	836	0	Substantial
Hand	15	14	367	0	None
Hanson	25	21	266	0	Minimal
Harding	2	2	59	0	None
Hughes	146	121	2268	4	Moderate
Hutchinson	56	38	1044	1	Substantial

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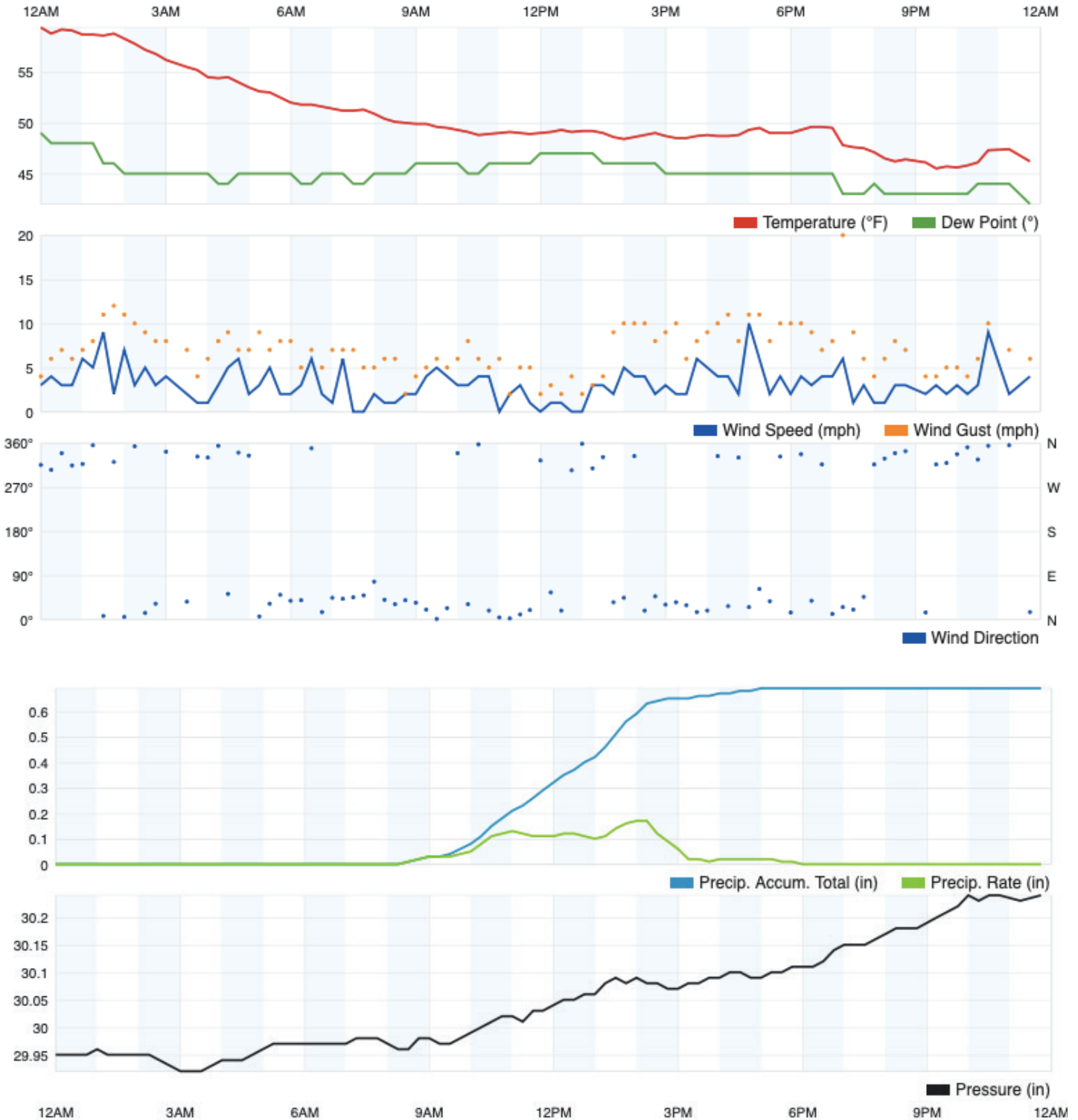
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Hyde	8	4	172	0	Minimal
Jackson	12	11	501	1	None
Jerauld	45	40	298	1	Moderate
Jones	6	3	76	0	Minimal
Kingsbury	25	21	687	0	Minimal
Lake	128	106	1114	6	Moderate
Lawrence	263	169	2374	4	Substantial
Lincoln	998	845	8552	2	Substantial
Lyman	104	90	1123	3	None
Marshall	19	17	561	0	None
McCook	60	44	763	1	Moderate
McPherson	14	10	261	0	Minimal
Meade	348	230	2344	1	Substantial
Mellette	25	24	410	0	Minimal
Miner	17	17	296	0	Minimal
Minnehaha	5601	4918	33295	71	Substantial
Moody	55	37	755	0	Substantial
Oglala Lakota	196	163	3109	2	Substantial
Pennington	1635	1187	12840	33	Substantial
Perkins	22	11	243	0	Moderate
Potter	25	12	372	0	Moderate
Roberts	105	89	2250	1	Moderate
Sanborn	16	14	271	0	Minimal
Spink	70	44	1349	0	Substantial
Stanley	23	22	328	0	Minimal
Sully	8	8	113	0	None
Todd	87	73	2526	5	Moderate
Tripp	27	22	690	0	Moderate
Turner	97	74	1091	0	Substantial
Union	290	247	2318	5	Substantial
Walworth	54	37	949	0	Substantial
Yankton	265	194	3797	3	Substantial
Ziebach	55	43	467	0	Moderate
Unassigned	0	0	13170	0	

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Decreasing
Clouds

High: 53 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Frost

Low: 34 °F

Wednesday



Areas Frost
then Sunny

High: 58 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 37 °F


Thursday





Sunny


High: 66 °F

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Today  48-54°
Mostly dry

Tonight  31-37°
Frost likely for the northern third of South Dakota

Wednesday  53-60°
Mostly dry

Frost Likely Wednesday Morning

Updated: 9/8/2020 3:07 AM Central

Well below average temperatures continue with frost likely for most of the northern third of South Dakota and far west central Minnesota Wednesday morning. Some locations, especially in far north central South Dakota, may see an early freeze as well.

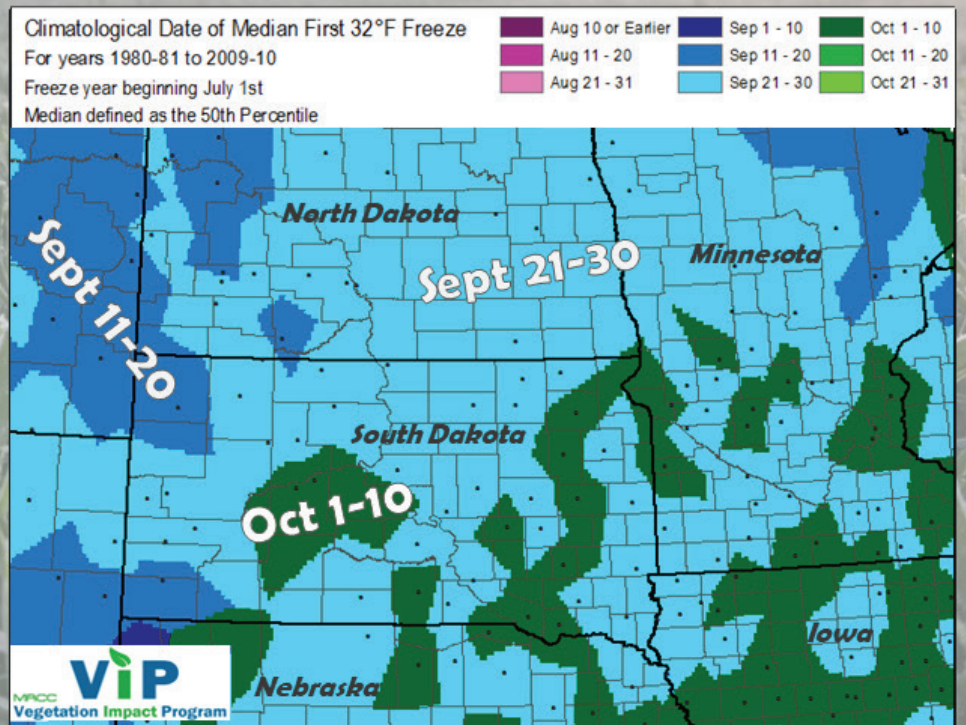
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The **first frost** of the season is possible **Tue night/Wed AM** as low temps dip to 30-35 F.

When is the season's first 32 F temp typically?

Eureka:	Sept 21
Britton:	Sept 22
McIntosh:	Sept 23
Aberdeen:	Sept 23
Watertown:	Sept 23
Kennebec:	Sept 23
Timber Lake:	Sept 23
Sisseton:	Sept 27
Milbank:	Sept 27
Gettysburg:	Sept 27
Wheaton:	Sept 28
Mobridge:	Sept 29
Pierre:	Oct 5
Murdo:	Oct 5



As temperatures plummet early this week, we look to see our first frost event Tuesday night, when lows dip to at or near freezing. Here is a look at when we typically hit 32 F in the region.

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Record Cold Possible Monday - Wednesday



Sept 7 - 9th, 2020

Cold High Temp Monday, Sept 7

<u>Location</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Forecast</u>
Aberdeen	53 F (1929)	56 F
Watertown	53 F (1911)	54 F
Pierre	58 F (1946)	57 F
Sisseton	57 F (1964)	57 F
Mobridge	56 F (1992)	55 F

Minimum Temp Tuesday, Sept 8

<u>Location</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Forecast</u>
Aberdeen	32 F (1992)	39 F
Watertown	30 F (1907)	38 F
Pierre	39 F (1995)	40 F
Sisseton	37 F (2008)	38 F
Mobridge	35 F (1943)	35 F

Cold High Temp Tuesday, Sept 8

<u>Location</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Forecast</u>
Aberdeen	52 F (1911)	56 F
Watertown	48 F (1929)	52 F
Pierre	55 F (1946)	53 F
Sisseton	54 F (1946)	55 F
Mobridge	53 F (1941)	54 F

Minimum Temp Wednesday, Sept 9

<u>Location</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Forecast</u>
Aberdeen	26 F (1898)	34 F
Watertown	27 F (1898)	35 F
Pierre	35 F (1943)	35 F
Sisseton	37 F (2008)	34 F
Mobridge	30 F (1943)	34 F

A number of daily temperature records could be in jeopardy over the next few days, both cold high and low temperatures.

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Today in Weather History

September 8, 1959: High winds and areas of blowing dust occurred across parts of central South Dakota from Walworth to Mellette. During the evening, wind gusts of 40 to 50 mph affected the counties either side of the Missouri River. Low visibility in blowing dust was blamed for a four-car crash near Pierre, injuring five persons, another accident near Mobridge injured one person. Barn buildings were blown over or unroofed near Delmont in Douglas County. Lightning started grass fires and burned several thousand acres of rangeland in Mellette and Lyman counties. In the late afternoon, high winds associated with a cold front gusted to 70 mph and destroyed six buildings on a farm north and east of Reliance. At 500 pm, winds ripped a camper off a pickup truck 12 miles south of Pierre. Winds were measured at 68 mph at Pierre. At 6 pm CDT winds gusting to 70 mph damaged many trees in the Watertown area, power lines, and some buildings. A trailer and truck, twelve miles north of Watertown, were blown over while traveling on Interstate 29. A large oil tank was also destroyed.

1900 - The greatest weather disaster in U.S. records occurred when a hurricane struck Galveston TX. A tide fifteen feet high washed over the island demolishing or carrying away buildings, and drowning more than 6000 persons. The hurricane destroyed more than 3600 houses, and total damage was more than thirty million dollars. Winds to 120 mph, and a twenty foot storm surge accompanied the hurricane. Following the storm, the surf was three hundred feet inland from the former water line. The hurricane claimed another 1200 lives outside of the Galveston area. (8th-9th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1925: In September 1925, South Carolina was in the middle of one of the most widespread and disastrous droughts in the state's history. The NWS Co-op station in Calhoun Falls reported 11 days above 100°F with a maximum temperature of 111°F on this day.

1987 - A tropical depression off the coast of South Carolina brought another round of heavy rain to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region and the Upper Ohio Valley. Showers and thunderstorms produced extremely heavy rain in eastern Pennsylvania, where flooding caused more than 55 million dollars across a seven county area. The afternoon high of 97 degrees at Miami FL was a record for the month of September. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Eighteen cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Roanoke VA with a reading of 42 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced very heavy rain in the central U.S. Thunderstorms during the late morning and afternoon produced five to nine inches of rain around Lincoln NE, with an unofficial total of eleven inches near Holmes Park. Up to six and a half inches of rain soaked northern and western Iowa. Eighty to ninety percent of the homes in Shenandoah IA, where 5.89 inches of rain was received, reported basement flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: A severe thunderstorm developed over the southern end of the Las Vegas Valley in Nevada. The storm moved north bringing damaging winds and heavy rain mainly across the eastern half of the metro area. Henderson Executive Airport recorded wind gusts of 80 mph. Air traffic control personnel temporarily evacuated the airport tower. Approximately 15 homes and trailers in Moapa were severely damaged by thunderstorm winds estimated at 80 to 90 mph.

2012: Severe storms impacted the New York City area, forcing a delay of the United States Open. A tornado hit a beach club in Queens, and another brought damage to Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York.

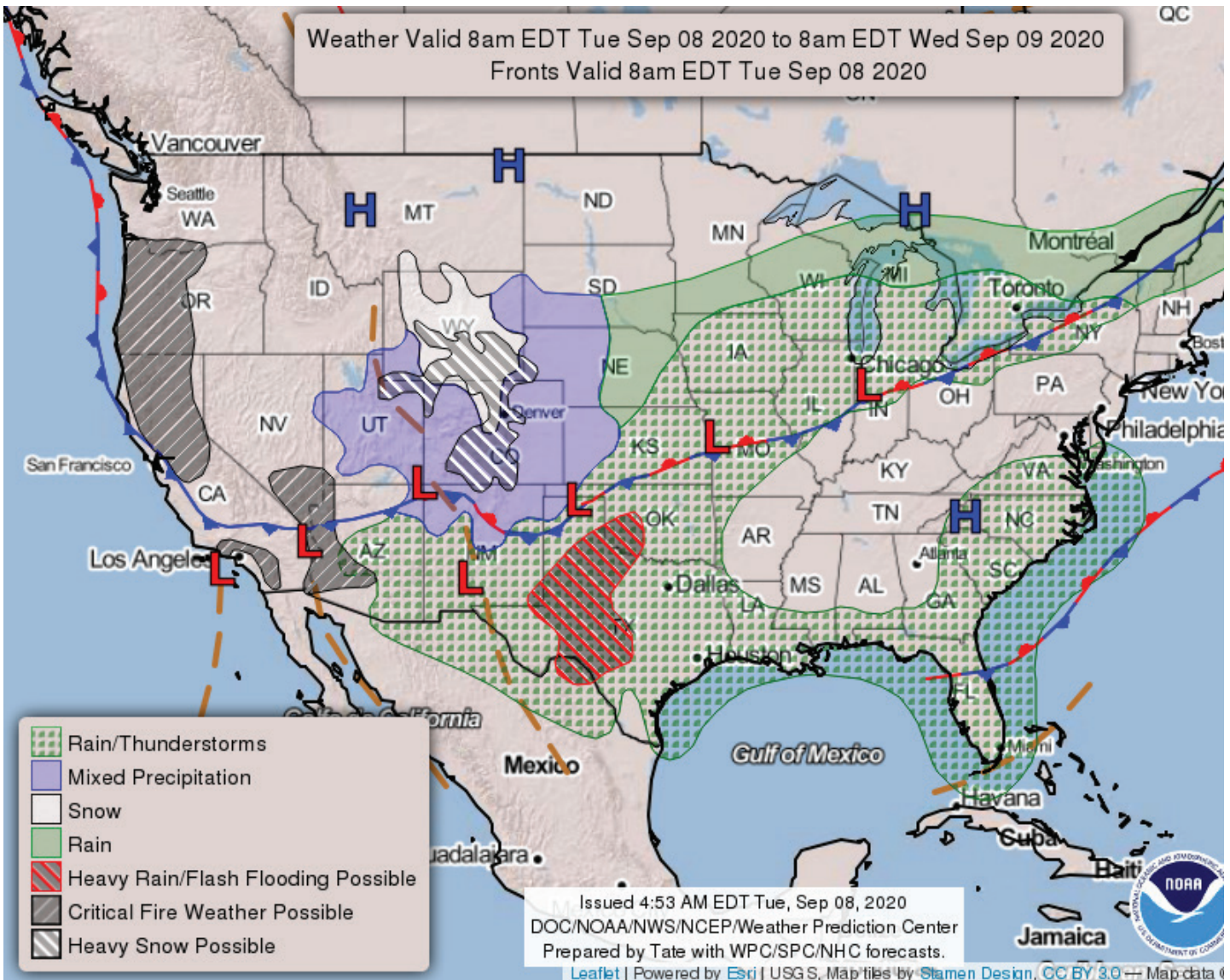
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 60 °F at 12:00 AM
Low Temp: 45 °F at 9:32 PM
Wind: 20 mph at 7:06 PM
Precip: .69

Record High: 101° in 1931, 1933
Record Low: 32° in 1992
Average High: 76°F
Average Low: 49°F
Average Precip in Sept...: 0.52
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.69
Average Precip to date: 16.81
Precip Year to Date: 14.04
Sunset Tonight: 7:57 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06 a.m.



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ADVANCE!

When Caesar crossed the English Channel from Gaul and landed on the shore, he knew that the odds were against his winning the impending battle. After thinking of the seriousness of the situation, he did a strange thing.

After he landed on the shore, he had all of his men get off of the ships and gather around him. He then ordered all but a few to move forward and not look back. Then, he ordered the remaining few to stay with him. At his command, they were to set fire to all of the ships.

After the first party made their way forward, he issued the order to set the ships ablaze. When the ships were blazing, he then gave another command for the men to turn around and see the burning ships.

The men were stunned as they looked at the burning vessels. They realized that they were now stranded in enemy territory and could not retreat to safety. There was nothing that they could do but advance and fight. And they did! With every ounce of strength they possessed, they fought their way forward and won!

When we face overwhelming challenges and difficult decisions, we must look to God and ask Him a simple question: What is the best way to advance and win the battle. He knows what we should do. However, we must trust in Him, His advice, and His strength to be victorious.

Prayer: Each day, Lord, we face tasks that are trying and problems that are perplexing. May we look to You for Your insight and wisdom as we face life's demands. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12-13/2020 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at the Groton Airport north of Groton
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/30/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota coronavirus cases rise by 191, no new deaths

BISMARCK, S.D. (AP) — The confirmed number of coronavirus cases in South Dakota rose by 191 on Monday, bringing the state's total number of cases to 15,300, according to new data released by the health department.

No new deaths were reported. The state has seen a total of 173 deaths since the pandemic began.

Health officials said 78 people were hospitalized as of Monday, down from 81 on Sunday. Overall, a total of 1,084 people have been hospitalized.

The state says 12,235 people have recovered from the virus. More than 156,000 people have been tested. There are currently 2,892 active cases, down from 3,018 on Sunday, according to state data.

Priest tapped as Duluth, Minnesota bishop resigns amid probe

DULUTH, Minn. (AP) — A priest recently tapped by Pope Francis to become a bishop for a northern Minnesota diocese has resigned after an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor in the 1980s surfaced before he could take up his post.

The Vatican announced Monday that Francis had accepted the resignation of Bishop-elect Michel Mulloy, whom the pope named in June to head the Duluth diocese. Mulloy was supposed to be elevated to bishop's rank in an Oct. 1 ceremony in Duluth. The Vatican did not provide details.

At the time of his appointment, Mulloy was serving as diocesan administrator in Rapid City, South Dakota. The Diocese of Rapid City said in a statement that it received the allegation last month and that it dates back to the 1980s. It said there have been no additional allegations of abuse involving Mulloy.

The Associated Press left a message seeking comment Monday at Mulloy's office in the Rapid City diocese.

It is highly unusual for a priest who has been selected to be a bishop to resign before that can happen. But the development underlines the pontiff's oft-stated resolve to crack down on predator priests as well as insist that any allegation of sexual abuse be promptly investigated.

The Rapid City diocese said Bishop Peter Muhich informed law enforcement of the development and that Mulloy was "directed to refrain from engaging in ministry."

"The diocese then commissioned an independent investigation to determine whether the allegation warranted further investigation under Canon (church) Law," the Rapid City diocese statement said. The review found that "the accusation met the standard for further investigation and conclusion and the Holy See was informed" by Muhich.

The Rapid City diocese said Mulloy received a summary of the specific allegation and submitted his resignation as bishop-elect to the pope.

Police in Rapid City said they have no report of allegations against Mulloy. It's unclear where the 1980s allegation happened and which law enforcement agency received the report. A message left with the diocese to seek more details was not immediately returned Monday.

Monsignor James Bissonette will continue to serve as administrator for the Diocese of Duluth until a new bishop is appointed. In a statement Monday, Bissonette said the diocese grieves with all who have suffered sexual abuse.

"I ask you to pray for the person who has come forward with this accusation, for Father Mulloy, for the faithful of our diocese, and for all affected," he said. "We place our hope and trust in God's providence as we await, again, the appointment of our next bishop."

According to the Star Tribune, Mulloy, 67, most recently served as vicar general and administrator for the Rapid City diocese. He was ordained in 1979 and served in the Sioux Falls and Rapid City dioceses before joining the Rapid City diocese in 1986.

Farmer's Almanac predicts wet winter

By JOHN O'CONNELL Idaho State Journal

POCATELLO, Idaho (AP) — Dwight Little jokes that farmers fall into two camps when it comes to their faith in the "Old Farmer's Almanac's" long-term weather prognostications: There are those who believe and those who don't.

"Then maybe there's the blend, too, who want to believe when it's in their favor and discount it when it's not," the Newdale farmer told the Idaho State Journal, upon further reflection.

By Little's logic, the almanac should have plenty of believers throughout Idaho farming country in its recently released full 2020-2021 winter weather forecast, which calls for above-normal snowfall throughout Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Above-normal precipitation is also expected in the northern portions of Utah and Colorado, the eastern sections of Washington and Oregon and the western Dakotas.

The almanac's longstanding prediction formula is a secret but is said to rely on factors including a mathematical and astronomical formula, sunspot activity, the tides and planetary alignment. Analyses have pegged the almanac's accuracy at about 52% — more accurate, at least, than Punxsutawney Phil, the famed groundhog said to predict six more weeks of winter or an early spring, depending on whether or not he sees his shadow on Feb. 2.

Little puts much greater stock in the longterm forecasts made by meteorologists, which he's found have become far more accurate and sophisticated in recent years.

"You're kind of working science against folklore and guesses," Little said.

Nonetheless, Little said the almanac's predictions come up in discussions among farmers at coffee shops, and he won't discount the ability of people who are in tune with the environment to analyze signs in nature, such as thickness of animal coats and timing of when aspen leaves change.

The almanac made some bold predictions nationwide for the coming winter, including the possibility of a blizzard striking the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast states during the second week of February. Below-normal temperatures are predicted from the Great Lakes westward through the Northern and Central Plains and Rockies.

"This winter will be filled with so many ups and downs on the thermometer, it may remind you of a 'polar' coaster," the almanac's editor, Peter Geiger Philom, said in a press release. "Our extended forecast is calling for another freezing, frigid and frosty winter for two-thirds of the country."

The almanac anticipates the Southwest will be mild and dry this winter.

The National Weather Service in Pocatello has a slightly less optimistic winter forecast for farmers hoping for an ample snowpack.

The agency's three-month rolling forecast for December, January and February predicts a normal winter in Southeast Idaho, and a 33% chance of above normal precipitation in Northern Idaho and the northern tip of Eastern Idaho.

National Weather Service meteorologist Travis Wyatt said projecting three or more months out is far from a perfect science, but forecasters generally come close by analyzing patterns. The major pattern they follow is El Nino and La Nina — which references temperature fluctuations between the ocean and atmosphere in east-central Equatorial Pacific.

Wyatt said the development of La Nina is predicted to gradually increase Southeast Idaho's chances of moisture from late winter through early spring, with the January, February and March forecast for the region also improving to a 33% chance of above-normal precipitation.

Meteorologist Kurt Buffalo, who is the National Weather Service's science and operations officer, said his agency's Climate Prediction Center will release its official winter forecast in mid-October.

There's a 60% chance of a La Nina developing, which tends to correlate with higher moisture and cooler temperatures in Southeast Idaho, Buffalo said.

"If we start to see a stronger likelihood that La Nina is developing, the chances of stronger precipitation and cooler temperatures would be nudged upwards," Buffalo said.

Farmers such as Little keep constant tabs on both long-term and short-term weather forecasts. Given the tight margins on which they operate, a change in the weather can dramatically affect their bottom lines.

Little noted that farmers learned less than 48 hours in advance last fall that a damaging frost was headed their way, and most of them worked day and night to save the bulk of their potato crops.

"I certainly track (the weather) both day and night," Little said. "It's like watching the crop markets. You're very in tuned with what's happening throughout the day and the week and the month. It's no different than marketing a crop — you're anticipating changes that are coming down the pike."

Belarus activist resists authorities' push to leave country

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A leading opposition activist in Belarus was held on the border Tuesday after she resisted an attempt by authorities' to force her to leave the country, part of government efforts to end a month of protests against the reelection of the country's authoritarian leader.

Maria Kolesnikova, a member of the Coordination Council created by the opposition to facilitate talks with longtime leader President Alexander Lukashenko on a transition of power, was detained Monday in the capital, Minsk, along with two other council members.

Early Tuesday, they were driven to the Ukrainian border, where authorities told them to cross into Ukraine. Kolesnikova refused, and remained on the Belarusian side of the border in the custody of Belarusian authorities.

Two other council members, Ivan Kravtsov and Anton Rodnenkov, crossed into Ukraine.

Some reports said that Kolesnikova ripped up her passport to avoid being forced to move to Ukraine.

Anton Bychkovsky, spokesman for Belarus' Border Guard Committee, confirmed that Kolesnikova is in the custody of Belarusian authorities, but refused to give any details of what happened on the border.

Belarus has applied similar tactics with other opposition figures, seeking to end a month of demonstrations against the reelection of Lukashenko in a vote that protesters see as rigged. Lukashenko has ruled the country for 26 years, relentlessly stifling dissent and keeping most of the economy in state hands.

The 66-year-old former state farm director has rejected criticism from the United States and the European Union, which said the Aug. 9 election was neither free nor fair and shrugged off their demands to engage in a dialogue with the opposition.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the main opposition challenger to Lukashenko, left for Lithuania a day after the election under pressure from authorities.

Addressing the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on Tuesday, Tsikhanuskaya called for international sanctions against Lukashenko and other government officials.

"We need international pressure on this regime, on this one individual, desperately clinging onto power," she said.

Tsikhanouskaya stated that Lukashenko doesn't have any legitimacy after stealing the vote, warning other countries against making any deals with the Belarusian government.

"He does not represent Belarus anymore," she said.

After a brutal crackdown on protesters in the first few days after the vote that stoked international outrage and swelled the ranks of protesters, authorities in Belarus have switched to threats and selective arrests of opposition activists and demonstrators.

Last week, Pavel Latushko, a former minister of culture and ambassador to France who joined the opposition council, traveled to Poland after facing threats and being questioned. His departure came a day after Lukashenko warned that Latushko had crossed a "red line" and would face prosecution.

On Saturday, a top associate of Tsikhanouskaya, Olga Kovalkova, also moved to Poland after the authorities threatened to keep her in jail for a long time if she refused to leave the country.

Kovalkova said agents of the Belarusian State Security Committee put her into a car, where she was told lie on the floor, unaware where they were taking her. She was dropped off in no-man's land between the Belarus and Poland border, and Polish border guards asked a bus driver driving into Poland to take her on board.

The efforts to make opposition activists leave the country come amid a criminal probe against members

of the Coordination Council. Belarusian prosecutors have accused them of undermining the country's security by calling for talks on a transition of power. Several council members were arrested and some others called for questioning.

Last week, Kolesnikova announced the creation of a new party, Together. She said the move will help overcome the current crisis, but the party founders' call for constitutional changes has stunned some other opposition council members, who argued that it could divert attention from the main goal of getting Lukashenko to step down.

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, and Monika Scislowska in Warsaw, Poland, contributed to this report.

Follow all AP stories on the developments in Belarus at <https://apnews.com/Belarus>

China, India accuse each other of border moves, firing shots

BEIJING (AP) — India and China accused each other on Tuesday of making provocative military moves and firing warning shots along their disputed border despite talks on ending the escalating tensions.

China said Indian forces on Monday crossed into territory it holds and fired warning shots at a Chinese patrol in what it called a violation of their agreements. India denied that and said Chinese soldiers tried to surround one of its forward posts in a "grave provocation" and also fired warning shots.

China described it as the first exchange of fire between the countries in 45 years.

The nuclear-armed rivals have been engaged in a tense standoff in the cold-desert Ladakh region since May, and their defense ministers met Friday in Moscow in the first high-level direct contact between the sides since the standoff began.

China's western military command said the incursion occurred Monday along the southern coast of Pangong Lake in an area known in China as Shenpaoshan and in India as Chushul. The two countries' local military commanders have held several rounds of talks to defuse the tense standoff.

After shots were fired, Chinese forces took "necessary measures to stabilize and control the situation," the command said in a statement citing spokesman Zhang Shuili. It demanded the Indian forces withdraw and investigate the move to open fire.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian repeated that Indian troops were the first to shoot. He said it was the first exchange of fire between the sides since 1975, despite the increasing tempo of recent clashes.

"We, the Chinese side, has been stressing repeatedly that the two sides should peacefully settle our differences through dialogue and consultation. Confrontation will not benefit either side," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing.

Col. Aman Anand, an Indian army spokesman, said China continues "provocative activities to escalate" tensions and called the Chinese military statement an attempt to mislead domestic and international audiences.

Anand said the Chinese soldiers tried to surround an Indian military post and fired a few shots in the air when the Indian soldiers "dissuaded" them. He said Indian troops "exercised great restraint."

He accused China's military of "blatantly violating agreements and carrying out aggressive maneuvers while engagement at military, diplomatic and political level is in progress."

There was no word of casualties on either side.

Late last month, India said its soldiers thwarted Chinese military's moves "to change the status quo" in violation of a consensus reached in past efforts to settle the standoff. In turn, China accused Indian troops of crossing established lines of control.

The activities last month and on Monday were alleged to have occurred on the southern bank of Pangong Lake, a glacial lake divided by the de facto frontier and where the India-China face off began on its northern flank in early May.

The standoff escalated to a nighttime clash on June 15 that was the deadliest conflict in 45 years between

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the countries. According to Indian officials, Chinese troops atop a ridge at the mouth of the narrow Galwan Valley threw stones, punched and pushed Indian soldiers down the ridge at around 4,500 meters (15,000 feet). India said 20 of its soldiers were killed, including a colonel. China did not report any casualties.

The disputed and undemarcated 3,500-kilometer (2,175-mile) border between India and China, referred to as the Line of Actual Control, stretches from the Ladakh region in the west to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in the east. China also claims all of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory.

The Asia giants fought a border war in 1962 that also spilled into Ladakh and ended in an uneasy truce. They have been trying to settle their border dispute since the early 1990s, without success.

India unilaterally declared Ladakh a federal territory and separated it from disputed Kashmir in August 2019, ending its semi-autonomous status. The move further strained the relationship between New Delhi and Beijing, which raised the issue at international forums including the U.N. Security Council.

In a symbolic move amid soaring tensions, India has banned scores of Chinese-owned apps, including TikTok, citing privacy concerns that it said pose a threat to India's sovereignty and security.

COVID-19 vaccine latest flashpoint in White House campaign

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The prospect of a vaccine to shield Americans from coronavirus infection emerged as a point of contention in the White House race as President Donald Trump accused Democrats of “disparaging” for political gain a vaccine he repeatedly has said could be available before the election.

“It’s so dangerous for our country, what they say, but the vaccine will be very safe and very effective,” the president pledged Monday at a White House news conference.

Trump leveled the accusation a day after Sen. Kamala Harris, the Democrats’ vice presidential candidate, said she “would not trust his word” on getting the vaccine. “I would trust the word of public health experts and scientists, but not Donald Trump,” Harris said.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden amplified Harris’ comments Monday after he was asked if he would get a vaccine for COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. Biden said he would take a vaccine but wants to see what the scientists have to say, too.

Biden said Trump has said “so many things that aren’t true, I’m worried if we do have a really good vaccine, people are going to be reluctant to take it. So he’s undermining public confidence.”

Still, the former vice president said: “If I could get a vaccine tomorrow I’d do it, if it would cost me the election I’d do it. We need a vaccine and we need it now.”

The back-and-forth over a coronavirus vaccine played out as three of the candidates fanned out across the country on Labor Day, the traditional start of the two-month sprint to the election. Harris and Vice President Mike Pence campaigned in Wisconsin and Biden went to Pennsylvania. Trump added the news conference to a schedule that originally was blank.

Harris, a California Democrat, said in a CNN interview broadcast Sunday that she would not trust a coronavirus vaccine if one were ready at the end of the year because “there’s very little that we can trust that ... comes out of Donald Trump’s mouth.” She argued that scientists would be “muzzled” because Trump is focused on getting reelected.

Trump dismissed her comments as “reckless anti-vaccine rhetoric” designed to detract from the effort to quickly ready a vaccine for a disease that has killed about 190,000 Americans and infected more than 6 million others, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

“She’s talking about disparaging a vaccine so that people don’t think the achievement was a great achievement,” Trump said, answering reporters’ questions as he stood at a lectern placed at the front door of the White House on the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the mansion.

“They’ll say anything,” he said.

Trump insisted he hasn’t said a vaccine could be ready before November, although he has said so repeatedly and as recently as Friday.

The president then proceeded to say what he had just denied ever saying.

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"What I said is by the end of the year, but I think it could even be sooner than that," he said about a vaccine. "It could be during the month of October, actually could be before November."

Under a program Trump calls "Operation Warp Speed," the goal is to have 300 million doses of a coronavirus vaccine in stock by January. He has spent hundreds of billions of dollars on what amounts to a huge gamble since vaccine development usually takes years.

Concerns exist about political influence over development of a vaccine, and whether one produced under this process will be safe and effective.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert and a member of the White House coronavirus task force, told CNN last week that it is unlikely but "not impossible" that a vaccine could win approval in October, instead of November or December.

Fauci added that he's "pretty sure" a vaccine would not be approved for Americans unless it was both safe and effective.

Stephen Hahn, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, has said the agency would not cut corners as it evaluates vaccines, but would aim to expedite its work. He told the Financial Times last week that it might be "appropriate" to approve a vaccine before clinical trials were complete if the benefits outweighed the risks.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, meanwhile, has given assurances that Trump "will not in any way sacrifice safety" when it comes to a vaccine. And executives of five top pharmaceutical companies pledged that no COVID-19 vaccines or treatments will be approved, even for emergency use, without proof they are safe and effective.

Some concerns were sparked by a letter dated Aug. 27 in which Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, asked governors to help government contractor McKesson Corp. make sure vaccine distribution facilities are up and running by Nov. 1.

Redfield did not say a vaccine would be ready by then.

Three COVID-19 vaccines are undergoing final-stage, or Phase 3, clinical trials in the U.S. Each study is enrolling about 30,000 people who will get two shots, three weeks apart, and then will be monitored for coronavirus infections and side effects for anywhere from a week to two years.

When will tourists return to Africa? Continent must guess

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Raino Bolz quickly diversified when his tourism business in South Africa's winelands crashed to a halt in March because of the coronavirus pandemic. He sold a minibus — useless without tourists to ferry around — and bought a herd of pregnant cows.

He'll have to wait for the cows to have calves and for the calves to be old enough to sell before he can make money from them. That probably won't be until early next year, but it's his insurance policy.

Bolz hopes to see a return of some tourists in November, the start of South Africa's tourism season. If foreign visitors — 80% of his income — don't arrive for end-of-year vacations, he'll need the profit from his cattle to stay afloat.

Africa will lose between \$53 billion and \$120 billion in contributions to its GDP in 2020 because of the crash in tourism, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates. Kenya expects at least a 60% drop in tourism revenue this year. South Africa a 75% drop. In South Africa, 1.2 million tourism-related jobs are already impacted, according to its Tourism Business Council. That's not far off 10% of total jobs in Africa's most developed economy and the total damage isn't yet clear.

"Devastation," council CEO Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa said.

South Africa's borders, including virtually all international flights, have been closed for nearly six months and there are no signs of them reopening.

The COVID-19 restrictions have shuttered what was once the lucrative centerpiece of African tourism, the safari.

For nearly 40 years, Desert and Delta has sold luxury safaris in the wildlife-rich Okavango Delta in

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northern Botswana and their clients have always been a particular kind of tourist. From North America or Western Europe, wealthy, retired and almost always over 60 years old, said James Wilson, Desert and Delta's marketing director. His fear — it's felt across the safari lands of southern and East Africa — is that those retirees will be the last to come back because of their age and vulnerability to COVID-19.

Jillian Blackbeard sees a silver lining. She's the CEO of a regional tourism association that represents safari operators in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

It'll take southern Africa's safari tourism three years to recover, Blackbeard said. But the virus could also kick-start a long overdue change. She said they've relied too much on that specific kind of client, white, elderly, North American or European. She's pressing for the whole region to use the moment to diversify. To attract their own African tourists, who have been ignored. To look to Asia and its multi-generational travelers. And to appeal to Black Americans.

"For a long, long time, the African-American diaspora has never traveled to southern Africa," she said. "It wasn't that they didn't want to come. It was because when you see a brochure it was always these white elderly people. COVID has allowed us to reach into that and say, 'OK, how do we make our industry more resilient by diversifying our market?'"

No one is untouched. Sun International, a major player with a portfolio of casinos, resorts and high-end hotels in South Africa and several other African countries, has so far kept its 8,500 employees, although on reduced salaries. It can't last. Sun International is now "having to consider quite severe restructures," said Graham Wood, chief operating officer for hospitality.

One of Sun International's landmark properties, the 5-star Table Bay Hotel on the Cape Town waterfront, has been closed for half the year in the absence of foreign visitors. Many hotels around it remain shut, too.

Wood does expect a bounce in domestic tourism at the end of the year from South Africans who aren't going overseas. And domestic tourism got a boost last month when South Africa eased restrictions to allow interstate leisure travel for the first time since late March. But the international tourist season this year is "not going to materialize," Wood said.

That'll be ruinous for Bolz in nearby Stellenbosch, whose attempts to lure locals have yielded just "a drop in a bucket," he said. "It's not going to sustain us."

His adventure tourism company combines hiking and cycling with wine-tasting tours in the mountain vineyards of Stellenbosch, near Cape Town, and epitomizes so many African tourism enterprises desperately missing their international visitors. He's clinging to the theory that his foreign customers are innately adventurous and will come back sometime during the season. He'll only really know early next year.

And he'll only know then if he can re-employ all his tour guides, experts in wine and the ecosystems of the Stellenbosch mountains. One is working at a laundry, two are helping out at a charity running soup kitchens to feed people permanently laid off because of the pandemic.

Looking at the prospects for tourism, Bolz said: "We can only do proper business once international borders open again."

What should I look for in a hand sanitizer?

By The Associated Press undefined

What should I look for in a hand sanitizer?

Pick one that contains mostly alcohol, and has few other ingredients.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says hand sanitizers should be at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol. Other approved ingredients may include sterile distilled water, hydrogen peroxide and glycerin, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

You should avoid anything with methanol or 1-propanol, both of which can be highly toxic. The FDA also warns people to watch out for hand sanitizers packaged in food and drink containers, since accidentally ingesting them could be dangerous.

Health officials also say to avoid hand sanitizers that replace alcohol with benzalkonium chloride, which is less effective at killing certain bacteria and viruses. Making your own sanitizers isn't encouraged either;

the wrong mix of chemicals can be ineffective or cause skin burns.

And you should only use hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands with soap and water, says Barun Mathema, an infectious disease researcher at Columbia University. Hand washing is better at removing more germs.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org.

More Viral Questions:

Can I get COVID-19 through my eyes or ears?

Can I use a face shield instead of a mask?

Can mosquitoes spread the coronavirus?

Fearing virus, parents in Spain rise against back to school

By SARA PUIG Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Ángela López hardly fits the profile of a rule-breaker. But the mother of a 7-year-old girl with respiratory problems has found herself among parents ready to challenge Spanish authorities on a blanket order to return to school.

They are wary of safety measures they see as ill-funded as a new wave of coronavirus infections sweeps the country. They fear sick students could infect relatives who are at higher risk of falling ill from COVID-19. And they claim that they have invested in computers and better network connections to prepare for online lessons, even preparing to homeschool their children if necessary.

Many of the defiant parents, including López, are also ready to stand up to the country's rigid, one-size-fits-all rule of mandatory in-school education, even if that means facing charges for truancy, which in Spain can be punished with three to six months in prison.

Her daughter was born with a condition that makes her prone to suffer episodes of bronchial spasms, which can cause difficulty breathing. With COVID-19 affecting the respiratory system, López doesn't want to take any risks.

"We feel helpless and a little offended. It's like they force us to commit an illegal act because they don't give us a choice," said López, who lives in Madrid.

"It's a matter of statistics," she added. "The more cases there are, the more likely you are to catch it."

More than half a million people have contracted the virus in Spain and at least 29,500 have died with it, although the official record leaves out many who perished in March and April without being previously tested.

With an average of 229 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants over the past two weeks, Spain currently has the highest rate of contagion in western Europe. Within the region, it leads what many experts are already calling a second wave of the pandemic, although the Spanish government insists that it now identifies most of the infections because it's testing more and better.

Officials also say that more than half of those infected now show no symptoms, which explains why hospitals that struggled at the peak of the epidemic in spring are seeing fewer COVID-19 patients this time.

As cases continue to go up and fuel debate in parents' group messaging chats, Spanish authorities last week issued revised guidelines for the reopening. They included mandatory masks for students 6 and older, daily body temperature checks, hand-washing at least five times per day and frequent ventilation of classrooms.

The Ministry of Health has also recommended setting up so-called "bubble-classrooms" where a reduced number of students interact only among themselves, and "COVID coordinators" in every school who can react quickly if an outbreak is identified.

But many parents say funding is insufficient to hire more teachers and that some schools just don't have additional space. They also see an inconsistency in authorities allowing up to 25 children in classrooms while banning large meetings of people or imposing curbs on nightlife in response to surging contagion.

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In Madrid, those restrictions have been expanded even to private homes, where no gatherings of more than 10 relatives or friends are allowed.

Over 8 million students in Spain are beginning the academic year this week or next, with the starting date varying in each of its 17 regions and according to education levels.

Although scientists are still studying the role children play in spreading COVID-19, younger children appear less infectious than teenagers. Children mostly suffer only mild infections when they catch the virus, but in rare cases they can get severe illness and studies have shown they can transmit COVID-19 to others in their households, including their parents.

Aroha Romero, a mother of two from the eastern region of Valencia, said the lack of clarity increases her anxiety.

"I would rather be threatened (to be charged with absenteeism) than have my children be motherless due to the coronavirus," she said

Lorenzo Cotino, a law professor at the University of Valencia who has studied the impact of legislation in education, noted that schooling is widely supported in Spain since a 1970 law made physical attendance mandatory, reducing social divisions.

The pandemic has reinforced the idea that "equality and schooling go hand in hand," Cotino said, because "children in marginalized groups with less internet access received a poorer education at home."

The families contesting the status quo say Spain's constitution gives them freedom to keep their children away from school. But there is neither a legal umbrella for homeschooling, nor is there a system that sets standards for studying at home.

The situation is similar in Germany, where homeschooling is illegal, although there has been enthusiasm there about the return to schools, and in Britain, where very high attendance rates followed last week's reopening. The British government has pledged to only fine parents not sending their children back as a "last resort."

Even in European countries where homeschooling is allowed, the practice is not as widespread as in the United States. A longstanding distance learning system for all ages exists in France but parents can also choose to privately educate their children.

French education authorities say it's too early in the academic year to identify if the coronavirus is driving a homeschooling trend.

In Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has warned of a "risk of social exclusion for not returning to school." And although he said there is "no such thing as zero risk," he said both students and teachers "will be much safer in educational centers than in other places."

His education minister, Isabel Celaá, has acknowledged that a number of students will miss the return to school for medical reasons. But stressing the existing punishment for absenteeism, she said last week that in-school learning "cannot be replaced by homeschooling."

Irene Briones, a law professor at Madrid's Complutense University, said that "if truancy numbers increase massively, nothing will happen" because "it's not in the government's interest" to go against large numbers of parents.

When Spain went into a strict three-month lockdown last spring, millions of students were forced to finish school from home and parents suddenly became teachers. Online classes helped a great deal and set the path towards a new way of learning in COVID-19 times, families said.

The demand now is that online education becomes standardized with an official digital learning program that will help students keep up with the coursework at least through December, during the first trimester of the academic year. They also say that laptops and other equipment should be handed out to narrow the technology divide between families.

"We will defend ourselves using all legal tools and arguments" if authorities and families don't reach an agreement, says Josu Gómez, whose Safe Return to School association has enlisted nearly 1,500 families in three weeks. A further 250,000 people have signed in two months a Change.org petition to demand safety measures for kids and teachers in classrooms.

But some are ready to face whatever consequences may come. Romero, the mother of two from Valencia, insisted her kids will stay home as long as infection numbers don't go down.

"If adults can work from home, kids can study from home," she said.

AP writers Aritz Parra in Madrid, Angela Charlton in Paris, Pan Pylas in London and David Rising in Berlin contributed to this report.

Virus puts new strain on Gaza's overwhelmed health system

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Dr. Ahmed el-Rabii spent years treating Palestinians wounded by Israeli fire during wars and clashes in the Gaza Strip. Now that the coronavirus has reached the blockaded territory, the 37-year-old physician finds himself in the unfamiliar role of patient.

El-Rabii is the first Gaza doctor diagnosed with COVID-19 and is among dozens of health-care workers infected during the local outbreak, which was detected late last month. The spread among front-line workers has further strained an already overburdened health-care system.

Speaking from one of the two hospitals designated to treat coronavirus cases, el-Rabii said the threat in many ways is more terrifying than war.

During fighting, "you only fear being hit by shrapnel by mistake," he said. "But with the virus, you constantly worry because you do not know how or from where it will hit you: from a patient, from your colleague, or by touching the elevator or any other surface."

Since 2007, Gaza has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade meant to isolate Hamas, the Islamic militant group that seized control of the territory that year from the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority.

The blockade is believed to have played a key role in slowing the arrival of the coronavirus. Few people can move in and out of the territory, and Hamas placed anyone returning to Gaza into mandatory quarantine centers for three weeks.

Before last month, the handful of Gaza's coronavirus cases were confined to the isolation facilities. But on Aug. 24, the first cases were detected among the general population, and the numbers have multiplied since.

Despite limited testing capacity, over 1,000 active cases have already been detected. Nine people have died.

The outbreak has been especially hard for Gaza's medical workers. For more than a decade, they have been on the front lines treating injuries during conflicts with Israel. They have worked in an ailing health system gutted by the blockade and intra-Palestinian political feuding that left doctors, nurses and other medical workers with only partial salaries.

Now, the virus is straining medical workers physically, mentally and financially. Ahmed Shatat, a Health Ministry official, said at least 68 medical workers have been infected.

Experts have warned that a wider outbreak in Gaza, home to some 2 million Palestinians, could be catastrophic because of the fragile health sector.

"Gaza's health system is woefully underequipped to cope with a large outbreak, with only enough intensive care beds and ventilators to cope with a few dozen serious cases," the International Committee of the Red Cross warned last week.

Shatat said there already was a shortage of medical workers even before the outbreak.

To help alleviate a staffing crunch, the Health Ministry has shortened the mandatory quarantine times for doctors and nurses who may have been exposed to the virus, from three weeks to two weeks. But it is still struggling to sufficiently staff the quarantine centers and isolation hospitals. Hundreds of workers are in protective isolation due to possible exposure, and pregnant workers and those with underlying health issues are excluded.

"Advanced health systems in the world could not sustain the outbreak, so how could our fragile, besieged, aid-dependent health system stand up to the crisis?" Shatat said.

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After graduating medical school in Egypt in 2008, el-Rabii returned home to Gaza to grim prospects, and the only jobs available were in the Hamas-run administration. In 2010, he was offered a job, but the cash-strapped government could not afford to pay his full salary.

"Mostly, we got 40% of our salaries. This makes the doctor look for extra work at private clinics and hospitals," he said.

Before he caught the virus, el-Rabii used to work 24 hours in full personal protective equipment in the sweltering summer heat. He would go home for a two-day break and return to the hospital for another 24-hour shift. "It was exhausting," he recalled.

"Now, with the coronavirus, everything has shut down, and work at private clinics has stopped so you are only left with the public job," he explained.

El-Rabii has worked at Gaza's main hospital, Shifa, for the last 10 years. After the coronavirus outbreak, he was assigned to a team treating people with respiratory disorders.

A female patient tested positive for the coronavirus. Immediately, all doctors and nurses were tested, and el-Rabii was found to be infected. "It was a shock, especially since we know little about the spread of the virus in Gaza," he said.

At a newly opened hospital funded by the Turkish government, el-Rabii spends most of his time confined in his room, reading the Quran, praying, and answering phone calls from friends and family members.

Haitham Ibrahim, a laboratory specialist, has been doing nonstop tests for the past two weeks at the lab of Khan Younis hospital in the southern Gaza Strip, the second hospital where COVID-19 patients stay.

He doesn't do coronavirus tests, but the 34-year-old lab technician does regular blood exams to monitor the status of infected patients.

"I often fall asleep from extreme exhaustion," he said in a phone interview. "We take rests between shifts, but when you get off the heavy protective clothes you feel as if your body has melted."

Ibrahim says he sometimes believes the patients are in a better situation than the medical workers. "The patient comes for 20 days and he recovers, but we will stay under this pressure, unsure when the virus will hit you, indefinitely."

Because of potential exposure during a two-week stint at work, Ibrahim is now spending two weeks in a quarantine center. When he returns home, he will have to remain in self-isolation for an additional 14 days before returning to the lab for another work cycle.

The lengthy separation from his family meant that he missed his youngest daughter's first steps. "I have five children and when I call them, I evade their questions about when I will come back home," he said.

Like most public workers, Ibrahim has only been receiving 40% of his base salary for years. This month, Hamas' government announced a 10% pay increase -- giving him an extra 100 shekels, or \$30.

"We hope our work will be rewarded after the crisis ends. Now it's time to focus on the work and overcome the pandemic," he said.

As California burns, the winds arrive and the lights go out

By MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

SHAVER LAKE, Calif. (AP) — New wildfires ravaged bone-dry California during a scorching Labor Day weekend that saw a dramatic airlift of more than 200 people trapped by flames and ended with the state's largest utility turning off power to 172,000 customers to try to prevent its power lines and other equipment from sparking more fires.

California is heading into what traditionally is the teeth of the wildfire season, and already it has set a record with 2 million acres burned this year. The previous record was set just two years ago and included the deadliest wildfire in state history — the Camp Fire that swept through the community of Paradise and killed 85 people.

That fire was started by Pacific Gas & Electric power lines. Liability from billions of dollars in claims from that and other fires forced the utility to seek bankruptcy protection. To guard against new wildfires and new liability, PG&E last year began preemptive power shutoffs when conditions are exceptionally dangerous.

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That's the situation now in Northern California, where high and dry winds are expected until Wednesday. PG&E received criticism for its handling of planned outages last year. The utility said it has learned from past problems, "and this year will be making events smaller in size, shorter in length and smarter for customers."

Two of the three largest fires in state history are burning in the San Francisco Bay Area. More than 14,000 firefighters are battling those fires and about two dozen others around California.

The fire danger also is high in Southern California, where new fires were burning in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. The U.S. Forest Service on Monday decided to close all eight national forests in the region and to shutter campgrounds statewide.

"The wildfire situation throughout California is dangerous and must be taken seriously," said Randy Moore, regional forester for the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region that covers California. "Existing fires are displaying extreme fire behavior, new fire starts are likely, weather conditions are worsening, and we simply do not have enough resources to fully fight and contain every fire."

Lynne Tolmachoff, spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said it's "unnerving" to have reached a record for acreage burned when September and October usually are the worst months for fires because vegetation has dried out and high winds are more common.

While the two mammoth Bay Area fires were largely contained after burning for three weeks, firefighters struggled to corral several other major blazes ahead of the expected winds. Evacuation orders were expanded to more mountain communities Monday as the largest blaze, the Creek Fire, churned through the Sierra National Forest in Central California.

It was one of many recent major fires that has displayed terrifyingly swift movement. The fire moved 15 miles (24 kilometers) in a single day during the weekend and burned 56 square miles (145.04 square kilometers). Since starting Friday from an unknown cause, it has burned 212 square miles (549 square kilometers).

Debra Rios wasn't home Monday when the order came to evacuate her hometown of Auberry, just northeast of Fresno. Sheriff's deputies went to her ranch property to pick up her 92-year-old mother, Shirley MacLean. They reunited at an evacuation center.

"I hope like heck the fire doesn't reach my little ranch," Rios said. "It's not looking good right now. It's an awfully big fire."

Mountain roads saw a steady stream of cars and trucks leaving the community of about 2,300 on Monday afternoon.

Firefighters working in steep terrain saved the tiny town of Shaver Lake from flames that roared down hillsides toward a marina. About 30 houses were destroyed in the remote hamlet of Big Creek, resident Toby Wait said.

"About half the private homes in town burned down," he said. "Words cannot even begin to describe the devastation of this community."

A school, church, library, historic general store and a major hydroelectric plant were spared in the community of about 200 residents, Wait told the Fresno Bee.

Sheriff's deputies went door to door to make sure residents were complying with orders to leave. Officials hoped to keep the fire from pushing west toward Yosemite National Park.

On Saturday, National Guard rescuers in two military helicopters airlifted 214 people to safety after flames trapped them in a wooded camping area near Mammoth Pool Reservoir. Two people were seriously injured and were among 12 hospitalized.

On Monday night, a military helicopter tried but failed to land near Lake Edison to rescue people trapped by the fire, the Fresno Fire Department said on Twitter. The department tweeted that "military pilots tried valiantly to land but heavy smoke conditions prevented a safe approach, another effort will be made shortly to evacuate the trapped people in Lake Edison and China Peak using night vision."

Chief Warrant Officer Joseph Rosamond, the pilot of a Chinook helicopter, said visibility was poor and winds increasingly strong during the three flights he made into the fire zone during the operation that

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started late Saturday and stretched into Sunday. His crew relied on night-vision goggles to search for a landing spot near a boat launch where flames came within 50 feet (15.24 meters) of the aircraft.

The injured, along with women and children, took priority on the first airlift, which filled both helicopters to capacity, he said.

"We started getting information about how many people were out there, how many people to expect, and that number kept growing. So we knew that it was a dire situation," Rosamond said.

In Southern California, crews scrambled to douse several fires that roared to life in searing temperatures, including one that closed mountain roads in Angeles National Forest and forced the evacuation of the historic Mount Wilson Observatory. Late Monday night, the Los Angeles County Fire Department told residents of Duarte, Bradbury and Monrovia near the forest to get ready for a possible evacuation.

Cal Fire said a blaze in San Bernardino County called the El Dorado Fire started Saturday morning and was caused by a smoke-generating pyrotechnic device used by a couple to reveal their baby's gender. In eastern San Diego County, a fire destroyed at least 10 structures after burning 16 square miles (41.44 square kilometers) and prompting evacuations near the remote community of Alpine in the Cleveland National Forest.

California has seen 900 wildfires since Aug. 15, many of them started by an intense series of thousands of lightning strikes in mid-August. There have been eight fire deaths and more than 3,300 structures destroyed.

Weber reported from Los Angeles along with contributing Associated Press journalist Frank Baker.

As California burns, the winds arrive and the lights go out

By MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

SHAVER LAKE, Calif. (AP) — New wildfires ravaged bone-dry California during a scorching Labor Day weekend that saw a dramatic airlift of more than 200 people trapped by flames and ended with the state's largest utility turning off power to 172,000 customers to try to prevent its power lines and other equipment from sparking more fires.

California is heading into what traditionally is the teeth of the wildfire season, and already it has set a record with 2 million acres burned this year. The previous record was set just two years ago and included the deadliest wildfire in state history — the Camp Fire that swept through the community of Paradise and killed 85 people.

That fire was started by Pacific Gas & Electric power lines. Liability from billions of dollars in claims from that and other fires forced the utility to seek bankruptcy protection. To guard against new wildfires and new liability, PG&E last year began preemptive power shutoffs when conditions are exceptionally dangerous.

That's the situation now in Northern California, where high and dry winds are expected until Wednesday. PG&E received criticism for its handling of planned outages last year. The utility said it has learned from past problems, "and this year will be making events smaller in size, shorter in length and smarter for customers."

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"The wildfire situation throughout California is dangerous and must be taken seriously," said Randy Moore, regional forester for the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Region that covers California. "Existing fires are displaying extreme fire behavior, new fire starts are likely, weather conditions are worsening, and we simply do not have enough resources to fully fight and contain every fire."

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On Monday night, a military helicopter landed near Lake Edison to rescue people trapped by the fire, the Fresno Fire Department said on Twitter. There was no immediate number of how many people were airlifted.

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Trump supporters rally near Portland and at Oregon Capitol

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Hundreds of people gathered on Labor Day in a small town south of Portland for a pro-President Donald Trump vehicle rally — just over a week after member of a far-right group was fatally shot after a Trump caravan went through Oregon's largest city.

Later, pro-Trump supporters and counter-protesters clashed at Oregon's Capitol.

Vehicles waving flags for Trump, the QAnon conspiracy theory and in support of police gathered about noon at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City.

The rally's organizers said they would drive to toward the state capital, Salem, and most left the caravan before that. A smaller group of members of the right-wing group the Proud Boys went on to Salem, where a crowd of several dozen pro-Trump supporters had gathered.

At one point Monday afternoon, the right-wing crowd rushed a smaller group of Black Lives Matters counter-demonstrators, firing paint-gun pellets at them. There were skirmishes, and the Black Lives Matter group dispersed shortly after local police arrived on the scene.

Organizers of the earlier vehicle rally said they did not plan to enter Multnomah County, where Portland is located. Oregon City is about 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of Portland.

On Aug. 29 Aaron "Jay" Danielson, a supporter of the right-wing group Patriot Prayer, was killed in Portland after a pro-Trump caravan went downtown. Trump supporters fired paint ball canisters at counter-demonstrators, who tried to block their way.

Danielson's suspected killer, Michael Forest Reinoehl, was fatally shot by police Thursday. Reinoehl was a supporter of antifa — shorthand for anti-fascists and an umbrella description for far-left-leaning militant groups.

Demonstrations in Portland started in late May after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and have continued for more than 100 days.

A fire started outside a police precinct on Portland's north side resulted in about 15 arrests during protests Sunday night into Monday morning, police said.

Demonstrators protesting police brutality began marching about 9 p.m. Sunday and stopped at the North Precinct Community Policing Center, the site of several volatile protests in recent months.

Officials warned demonstrators against entering the precinct property, saying they would be trespassing and subject to arrest.

Shortly after arriving, the crowd began chanting, among other things, "burn it down," police said. Some in the group lit a mattress on fire.

Most of those arrested were from Portland. Others were from San Francisco; Sacramento, California; Mesa, Arizona; and two from Vancouver, Washington.

Charges included interfering with an officer, resisting arrest, reckless burning and possession of a destructive device.

Hopes fading for coronavirus deal as Congress returns

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At least there won't be a government shutdown.

But as lawmakers straggle back to Washington for an abbreviated preelection session, hopes are dimming for another coronavirus relief bill — or much else.

Talks between top Democrats and the Trump administration broke off last month and remain off track, with the bipartisan unity that drove almost \$3 trillion in COVID-19 rescue legislation into law this spring

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replaced by toxic partisanship and a return to Washington dysfunction.

Expectations in July and August that a fifth bipartisan pandemic response bill would eventually be birthed despite increased obstacles has been replaced by genuine pessimism. Recent COVID-related conversations among key players have led to nothing.

Democrats seem secure in their political position, with President Donald Trump and several Senate GOP incumbents lagging in the polls. Trump is seeking to sideline the pandemic as a campaign issue, and Republicans aren't interested in a deal on Democratic terms — even as needs like school aid enjoy widespread support.

Poisonous relationships among key leaders like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows give little reason for confidence about overcoming obstacles on the cost, scope and details of a potential relief bill. Pelosi recently referred to Meadows as "whatever his name is," while the Meadows-run White House during a press briefing ran a video loop of Pelosi's controversial visit to a San Francisco hair salon.

Trump said Monday that Democrats "don't want to make a deal because they think that if the country does as badly as possible ... that's good for the Democrats."

"I am taking the high road," he told reporters at the White House. "I'm taking the high road by not seeing them."

All of this imperils the chances for another round of \$1,200 direct payments delivered under Trump's name, the restoration of more generous unemployment benefits to those who've lost their jobs because of the pandemic, updates to a popular business subsidy program, and money to help schools reopen and states and local governments avoid layoffs.

"I personally would like to see one more rescue package, but I must tell you the environment in Washington right now is exceedingly partisan because of the proximity to the election," said GOP Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell at an appearance in Kentucky last week. "We've been in discussion now for the last month or so with no results so far. So I can't promise one final package."

McConnell had been a force for a deal but does not appear eager to force a vote that exposes division in his ranks.

Many Senate Republicans are also wary or opposed outright to another major chunk of debt-financed virus relief, even as GOP senators imperiled in the election like Susan Collins of Maine and Cory Gardner of Colorado plead for more. Republicans are struggling to coalesce around a unified party position — and that's before they engage with Democratic leaders, who are demanding far more.

The relationship between Pelosi and her preferred negotiating partner, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, is civil but isn't generating much in the way of results, other than a promise to avoid a government shutdown at the end of the month by keeping a government-wide temporary spending bill free of controversy. That measure is likely to keep the government running into December. It's likely to contain a bunch of lower-profile steps, such as an extension of the federal flood insurance program and a temporary reauthorization of spending from the highway trust fund.

The decision for a "clean," controversy-free stopgap bill, known as a continuing resolution, means that both sides will forgo gamesmanship that uses the threat of a government shutdown to try to gain leverage. Trump forced a shutdown in 2018-2019 in a failed attempt to extract money for his U.S.-Mexico border wall, while Democrats lost a shutdown encounter in 2017 over legislation to help immigrants brought illegally to the country as children win permanent legal status.

"Now we can focus just on another relief bill, and we're continuing to do that in good faith," Vice President Mike Pence said Friday on CNBC.

But if talks continue to falter, there's little to keep lawmakers in Washington long, particularly with the election fast approaching.

The Senate returns on Tuesday to resume its diet of judicial and administration nominations. The House doesn't come back until Sept. 14 for a schedule laden with lower-profile measures such as clean energy legislation and a bill to decriminalize marijuana. Some Democrats are expected to continue to take advan-

tage of remote voting and may not return to Washington at all.

Trump, Biden spar over economy, workers in Labor Day blitz

By NOREEN NASIR, ALEXANDRA JAFFE and KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and President Donald Trump spent Monday diminishing each other's credentials on the economy and understanding of the American worker as the presidential campaign entered its final, post-Labor Day stretch.

While workers live by an "American code," Biden said Trump "lives by a code of lies, greed and selfishness" as he met with labor leaders in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a key swing state. Trump, meanwhile, tried to put the halting economic recovery under the best light in a White House press conference where he said Biden and his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, would "destroy this country and would destroy this economy."

Labor Day typically marks the unofficial start to the fall campaign season as candidates accelerate their activity for the final sprint to Election Day. Both campaigns reflected that urgency Monday, as Harris and Vice President Mike Pence each campaigned in Wisconsin, a state Trump narrowly won in 2016. The events played out against the background of the pandemic, which has upended campaigning and pushed Biden and Harris in particular to conduct much of the traditional election activity online.

While the health of the American economy and status of workers were dominant Labor Day themes, both campaigns also focused on recent protests that have roiled Wisconsin and the rest of the nation after police shot Jacob Blake, a Black man, in Kenosha last month.

Harris, the first Black woman on a major party presidential ticket, met privately with Blake's family at the Milwaukee airport after arriving in the state, where she spoke with Blake by phone from his hospital bed. Harris told Blake she was proud of him and individually spoke to each of his family members, in person and on the phone, urging them to take care of their physical and mental health, Blake's lawyers said in a statement.

Biden met with Blake's family during a visit to Wisconsin last week. Trump did not during a trip of his own last week, instead meeting with law enforcement and business owners whose property had been damaged during protests. Nor did Pence, who touched on the protests during a speech in La Crosse, where he toured an energy facility.

"We will have law and order in every city in this country for every American of every race and creed," Pence said.

Out on the trail, signs of the pandemic were evident. While Pence didn't speak with a mask on, workers from the power company he toured did as they stood behind him. Harris was careful not to stray far from blue "X" marks taped on the floor to encourage social distancing as she toured an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers training facility. While supporters gathered outside the candidates' stops, they had minimal interaction with members of the public beyond the people invited to their events.

After meeting with Black business owners, Harris greeted a crowd of about 50 supporters outside as she left, removing her mask briefly while telling them, "We have to get this done, I need your help in Milwaukee." She noted in-person absentee voting begins in the state on Oct. 20, which is her birthday.

Harris also met with Black business owners in Milwaukee, where she said her day of campaigning was focused on "the dignity of work and the dignity of human beings."

Biden spoke to a small group of labor leaders in a backyard in Lancaster, where he criticized Trump for "refusing to deal with the problems that affect ordinary people" and called for strengthening unions. His campaign announced endorsements from the Laborers' International Union of North America, the International Union of Elevator Constructors and the National Federation of Federal Employees, collectively representing hundreds of thousands of union workers nationwide.

Later, at an AFL-CIO virtual town hall with union President Richard Trumka, Biden called Trump's alleged remarks about fallen soldiers being "losers" and "suckers" un-American and said Trump would never understand why Americans serve. Trump has denied the remarks.

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"He'll never understand you, he'll never understand us, he'll never understand our cops, our firefighters, because he's not made of the same stuff," Biden said.

Earlier in the day, Trump painted Biden as a leader incapable of handling the coronavirus and reviving the economy and pledged his own "undying loyalty to the American worker."

He boasted of adding more than 10 million jobs since May, without mentioning that's only about half of the jobs lost since the pandemic began. He also said the unemployment rate "plunged" to 8.4%. It was a sharper decline than many economists expected from the prior month, but economists broadly view the latest report as evidence that further economic improvement will be sluggish.

He alleged Biden and Democrats would "immediately collapse the economy."

The day marked Harris' first solo foray onto the campaign trail for in-person events since she became Biden's running mate nearly a month ago. Biden himself has stepped up his campaigning over the past week, traveling to Pittsburgh and Kenosha and holding two news conferences. Aides say to expect both Biden and Harris to increase their campaigning for the remaining weeks.

Polls consistently show the economy as an issue at the top of voters' minds.

A strong economy that was Trump's biggest asset for reelection has now become a potential liability, brought down by the coronavirus. Biden says Trump has had an inadequate response to the pandemic, resulting in more loss of life and jobs than necessary.

The U.S. economy has been steadily rebounding from its epic collapse in the spring as many businesses have reopened and rehired some laid-off employees. Yet the recovery is far from complete. Only about half the 22 million jobs that vanished in the pandemic have been recovered.

Economic inequalities also appear to have widened, with lower-income and minority workers suffering disproportionately while affluent Americans have lost fewer jobs and even benefited from rising stock and home prices.

Ronayne reported from Sacramento, California, and Nasir reported from Milwaukee. Associated Press writer Amy Forliti contributed from Minneapolis.

'Mighty mice' stay musclebound in space, boon for astronauts

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Bulkied-up, mutant "mighty mice" held onto their muscle during a month-long stay at the International Space Station, returning to Earth with ripped bodybuilder physiques, scientists reported Monday.

The findings hold promise for preventing muscle and bone loss in astronauts on prolonged space trips like Mars missions, as well as people on Earth who are confined to bed or need wheelchairs.

A research team led by Dr. Se-Jin Lee of the Jackson Laboratory in Connecticut sent 40 young female black mice to the space station in December, launching aboard a SpaceX rocket.

In a paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Lee said the 24 regular untreated mice lost considerable muscle and bone mass in weightlessness as expected — up to 18%.

But the eight genetically engineered "mighty mice" launched with double the muscle maintained their bulk. Their muscles appeared to be comparable to similar "mighty mice" that stayed behind at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

In addition, eight normal mice that received "mighty mouse" treatment in space returned to Earth with dramatically bigger muscles. The treatment involves blocking a pair of proteins that typically limit muscle mass.

A SpaceX capsule brought all 40 mice back in good condition, parachuting into the Pacific off the California coast in January. Some of the ordinary mice were injected with the "mighty mice" drug after returning and quickly built up more muscle than their untreated companions, Lee said.

The scientists completed the experiment just as the coronavirus was hitting the U.S.

"The only silver lining of COVID is that we had time to write it up very intensively" and submit the results

for publication, said Dr. Emily Germain-Lee of Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Lee's wife who also took part in the study. Both are affiliated with the University of Connecticut.

While encouraged by their findings, the couple said much more work needs to be done before testing the drug on people to build up muscle and bone, without serious side effects.

"We're years away. But that's how everything is when you go from mouse to human studies," Germain-Lee said.

Lee said the experiment pointed out other molecules and signaling pathways worth investigating — "an embarrassment of riches ... so many things we'd like to pursue." His next step: possibly sending more "mighty mice" to the space station for an even longer stay.

Three NASA astronauts looked after the space mice, performing body scans and injections: Christina Koch and Jessica Meir, who performed the first all-female spacewalk last fall, and Andrew Morgan. They are listed as co-authors.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

The Summer of COVID-19 ends with health officials worried

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

The Lost Summer of 2020 drew to a close Monday with many big Labor Day gatherings canceled across the U.S. and health authorities pleading with people to keep their distance from others so as not to cause another coronavirus surge like the one that followed Memorial Day.

Downtown Atlanta was quiet as the 85,000 or so people who come dressed as their favorite superheroes or sci-fi characters for the annual Dragon Con convention met online instead. Huge football stadiums at places like Ohio State and the University of Texas sat empty. Many Labor Day parades marking the unofficial end of summer were called off, and masks were usually required at the few that went on.

"Please, please do not make the same mistakes we all made on Memorial Day weekend. Wear your masks, watch your distance and wash your hands," said Dr. Raul Pino, state health director in Orange County, Florida, which includes the Orlando area.

The U.S. had about 1.6 million confirmed COVID-19 cases around Memorial Day, before backyard parties and other gatherings contributed to a summertime surge. It now has more than 6.2 million cases, according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University. Deaths from the virus more than doubled over the summer to nearly 190,000.

In New Orleans, which had one of the largest outbreaks outside of New York City this spring, city officials reminded residents that COVID-19 doesn't take a holiday after they received 36 calls about large gatherings and 46 calls about businesses not following safety rules on Friday and Saturday.

"This is not who we are, and this is not how we — as a community — get back to where we want to be," the city said.

In South Carolina, which was a hot spot of contagion over the summer before cases started to decline in early August, 8,000 fans, including Gov. Henry McMaster, were allowed to attend the NASCAR race at the Darlington Raceway on Sunday. State officials approved a socially distant attendance plan at the track, which can hold 47,000 people.

It was the biggest gathering in the state since the outbreak started six months ago. Many rows and seats were kept empty to keep groups of fans apart, and people were asked to wear masks.

Debbie Katsanos drove down from New Hampshire with her husband, her father and a friend. It was their first trip out of state since COVID-19 started spreading. They had time off because the Labor Day weekend fair where they typically sell concessions canceled this year.

Katsanos said they wore masks at all times when they were away from their motor home, ate in a restaurant only once on the way down and tried to stay socially distant when visiting with other people at their campground.

"It's probably our only chance to get somewhere before the summer ends," Katsanos said Monday as she sat in traffic on Interstate 95 in North Carolina on the long trip home. "I saw it as the turning of the corner. We survived this. Let's live life a little."

Follow AP coverage of the pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

UK judge rejects bid to delay Assange extradition hearing

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A British judge on Monday rejected a request by lawyers for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to delay his extradition hearing until next year to give his lawyers more time to respond to U.S. allegations that he conspired with hackers to obtain classified information.

The adjournment request came on the first day of a London court hearing where Assange is fighting American prosecutors' attempt to send him to the U.S. to stand trial on spying charges.

U.S. prosecutors have indicted the 49-year-old Australian on 18 espionage and computer misuse charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret U.S. military documents a decade ago. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

Assange's lawyers say the prosecution is a politically motivated abuse of power that will stifle press freedom and put journalists around the world at risk.

The U.S. Justice Department expanded its case against Assange in a new indictment announced in June, though it did not introduce new charges. But Assange attorney Mark Summers said it was "an impossible task" for the legal team to deal with the new allegations in time for Monday's court hearing, especially since they had only "limited access" to the imprisoned Assange.

He said District Judge Vanessa Baraitser should excise the new American claims, which he said were sprung on the defense "out of the blue."

The judge rejected the request, saying the defense had declined an earlier opportunity in August to postpone the hearing. The defense then asked for the case to be adjourned until January. Baraitser refused, saying Assange's lawyers had "ample time" before Monday to express their concerns.

The case has already been held up for months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Assange, who has spent 16 months in a British prison, sat in the dock at the Old Bailey criminal court and formally refused the U.S. extradition demand. Assange, who lawyers say has suffered physical and mental ill-health because of his ordeal, wore a suit and tie and spoke clearly to confirm his name and date of birth.

Several dozen supporters, including fashion designer Vivienne Westwood and Assange's partner, Stella Moris, gathered outside the courthouse, chanting, banging drums and calling his prosecution a threat to press freedom.

"Julian Assange is the trigger, he is shining the light on all the corruption in the world," Westwood said.

American authorities allege that Assange conspired with U.S. army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to hack into a Pentagon computer and release hundreds of thousands of secret diplomatic cables and military files on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The new June indictment accuses Assange of recruiting hackers at conferences in Europe and Asia, recruiting a teenager to hack into the computer of a former WikiLeaks associate and conspiring with members of hacking groups known as LulzSec and Anonymous. U.S. prosecutors say the evidence underscores Assange's efforts to procure and release classified information, allegations that form the basis of criminal charges.

Assange's lawyers, however, argue that he is a journalist entitled to First Amendment protection and say the leaked documents exposed U.S. military wrongdoing. Among the files released by WikiLeaks was video of a 2007 Apache helicopter attack by American forces in Baghdad that killed 11 people, including two Reuters journalists.

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Assange's legal troubles began in 2010, when he was arrested in London at the request of Sweden, which wanted to question him about allegations of rape and sexual assault made by two women. He refused to go to Stockholm, saying he feared extradition or illegal rendition to the United States or to the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 2012, Assange sought refuge inside the Ecuadorian Embassy, where he was beyond the reach of U.K. and Swedish authorities — but also effectively a prisoner, unable to leave the tiny diplomatic mission in London. The relationship between Assange and his hosts eventually soured, and he was evicted from the embassy in April 2019. British police immediately arrested him for jumping bail in 2012.

Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019 because so much time had elapsed, but Assange remains in London's high-security Belmarsh Prison as he awaits the extradition decision.

Supporters say the ordeal has harmed Assange's physical and mental health, leaving him with depression, dental problems and a serious shoulder ailment. The hearing is expected to include expert psychiatric evidence about his mental state.

Journalism organizations and human rights groups have urged Britain to refuse the extradition request. Amnesty International said Assange was "the target of a negative public campaign by U.S. officials at the highest levels."

The extradition hearing opened in February but was put on hold when the U.K. went into lockdown in March to slow the spread of coronavirus. It is resuming with social distancing measures in court and video feeds so journalists and observers can watch remotely.

The case is due to run until early October. The judge is expected to take weeks or even months to consider her verdict, with the losing side likely to appeal.

Prince Harry repays taxpayer money for UK home renovation

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry has repaid 2.4 million pounds (\$3.2 million) in British taxpayers' money that was used to renovate the home in Windsor intended for him and his wife Meghan before they gave up royal duties and moved to California.

A spokesman for the couple said Monday that Harry had made a contribution to the Sovereign Grant, the public money that goes to the royal family. He said the contribution "fully covered the necessary renovation costs of Frogmore Cottage," near Queen Elizabeth II's Windsor Castle home, west of London.

He said Frogmore Cottage will remain the home of Harry and Meghan, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, when they visit the U.K.

Royal accounts for 2019 show that 2.4 million pounds was spent renovating the house, including structural work, rewiring and new flooring. Harry and Meghan agreed to pay back the money and start paying rent as part of the plans drawn up when they quit as senior working royals in March.

They recently bought a house in Santa Barbara, California and last week announced a deal with Netflix to produce a range of films and series for the streaming service.

Follow all AP stories about the royals at <https://apnews.com/PrinceHarry>.

South African protesters close stores over offensive ad

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) —

Protests over an advertisement viewed as racially offensive forced the closure Monday of at least 60 outlets of a chain of drugstores.

Leaders of the leftist opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters led the protests against the nationwide retailer Clicks, in which some of its supporters vandalized some stores.

The advertisement that sparked the protests depicts two different types of hair. One shows a Black woman's natural hair and one of a white woman's hair. The Black woman's hair is described in the ad as "dry, damaged hair," while the white woman's hair is described as "fine, flat hair."

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It sparked outrage on social media, with people accusing the retailer of racism and insensitivity toward Black people's identity.

The Economic Freedom Fighters will not let the company return to normal operations until it takes specific measures to rid itself of racism, said the militant party's deputy president Floyd Shivambu, who led the protest at the Clicks store in Johannesburg's posh Sandton suburb.

The company must disclose the names of all people involved in commissioning the advertisement and the name of the company which produced it and provide evidence that Clicks has taken action against them.

"Unless they do that Clicks will not be open in all parts of South Africa," said Shivambu to The Associated Press at the demonstration.

"We are not going to agree to allow racist institutions to be allowed to continue existing as if nothing is wrong," said Shivambu.

The company has since issued an apology to the public and said it had suspended two junior employees who were involved in producing and publishing the advertisement.

"I understand the emotions that are coming through from society, from Black people, from our staff ... When I looked at those images it took me two seconds to realize how insensitive they were. I don't know why we posted them," Clicks CEO Vikesh Ramsunder told radio station CapeTalk on Monday.

The government issued a statement over the issue.

"Whilst we are equally disturbed by the crude racist display by the advertisement in question, the acts of lawlessness of vandalizing and burning down Clicks stores that have been reported today are concerning and go against the spirit of peace and respect for human rights that has shaped this country since the dawn of democracy. Engaging in lawless behavior is not a responsible way to resolve conflict," said the statement issued by the Government Communication and Information System.

"We remain committed to the values of democracy. Any form of discrimination or violation of human rights for whatever reason cannot be tolerated as it undermines the progress made in building a united democratic country," Minister in the Presidency, Jackson Mthembu said in the statement.

Mthembu noted that in March, 2019, the Cabinet approved the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which he said empowers the government to act against such injustices.

"Even in the face of resistance by a small minority, we continue with efforts to build a united South Africa that we can all be proud of," Mthembu said. "As we launch Heritage Month, we are reminded of the many cultures, traditions and languages that make us who we are. In the spirit of social cohesion, let us all cherish and respect one another regardless of color, background, gender and religion."

Southern Africa's hunger upsurge blamed on climate, COVID-19

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — An estimated 45 million people in southern Africa are food insecure, with the number of people without access to adequate affordable and nutritious food up 10% from last year, the World Food Program said Monday.

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with climate change and the struggling economies of several countries, are the main causes of the food insecurity, said international aid organizations in a webinar organized by the Foreign Correspondents Association of Southern Africa.

Zimbabwe is the worst affected country, with its number of food insecure people expected to reach 8.6 million by the end of this year, World Food Program director in southern Africa, Lola Castro, said.

"We are going to see levels of food insecurity that we have never seen for many years," in 13 of the region's 16 countries, Castro said.

"We have chronic underlying causes that we know very well, and they are basically mostly related to climatic shocks ... drought, floods or big cyclones," said Castro.

She said COVID-19 was an additional emergency that has enormously hurt the livelihoods of many poor people in the region. Lockdowns have made large numbers of people unemployed, increasing food

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insecurity, she said.

Many farmers, especially women, had been severely affected by COVID-19 and its impact on food production, said ActionAid Africa humanitarian advisor, Chikondi Chabvuta.

"Southern Africa has faced impacts of climate change for the past four years nonstop. ... I have witnessed the short-lived hope in people's eyes these past four years when seeds are distributed or exchanged in the hope for a better yield next season, only to be disappointed by more climate disasters," she said.

"COVID-19 is exposing the existing systematic weaknesses of the regional policies meant to develop resilient food security," said Chabvuta. "This includes reliance on imports for agricultural production for food supply."

Zimbabwean farmer Juliet Hove said lack of access to water and the markets were also major problems for small-scale farmers in her country.

According to Hove, COVID-19 restrictions on movements were preventing small-scale farmers from traveling to marketplaces to sell seeds and produce, reducing their ability to earn an income.

Bold hopes for virus antibody tests still unfulfilled

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the height of the coronavirus lockdown, President Donald Trump and his top health advisers trumpeted a new test that would help Americans reclaim their lives — one that would tell them if they already had the virus and were protected from getting it again.

Their arrival would help "get Americans back to work" by showing those who might have "the wonderful, beautiful immunity," said Trump, a point repeated at the daily briefings last April.

Months later, the U.S. is awash in the tests but the bold predictions about their usefulness have yet to materialize.

"There was definitely a lot of wishful thinking that there was going to be a magical test that was going to save us all, but we're not there yet," said Dr. Jennifer Rakeman of New York City's Public Health Laboratory.

The tests check the blood for antibodies the body makes to fight off an infection. Scientists are still working to figure out how well antibodies for the coronavirus may shield someone from another infection, or how long that protection might last. Some early studies suggested any immunity fades fast; research published last week was more promising, suggesting that antibodies last at least four months after diagnosis and do not fade quickly.

For now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Medical Association explicitly warn that antibody tests should not be used to make decisions about returning workers to the office or students to school, though some labs still promote them for those uses. The CDC recommends everyone — even those who were sick and recovered — take precautions to prevent getting and spreading the virus.

Experts say it was probably unrealistic to expect answers to key immunity questions early in the outbreak. Those questions have traditionally been answered only through long-term animal or human studies, said Marc Jenkins of the University of Minnesota.

The National Institutes of Health and universities are conducting some of this work, but much of it has taken a back seat to the rapid development of vaccines in the middle of a pandemic.

"Everyone's impatient and I can see why," Jenkins said. "But there's no easy path to this knowledge" about immunity.

Antibody tests are different from the standard nasal swab tests that diagnose active infections. Instead, they use a blood sample or finger-prick of blood to look for signs of a past infection, whether the person was sick or had no symptoms at all. Based on other viruses, experts expect those with coronavirus antibodies to be at least partly immune for several months, if not longer.

Dr. Anthony Fauci and other members of the White House task force said early on it was a "reasonable assumption" that if "you have the antibody, you're protected" but added that there wasn't proof.

To get that proof, scientists first run experiments in animals. Human trials come next and can take even longer. Researchers track people who had an infection and developed antibodies to see if they become

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reinfecting. Their antibodies are measured to gauge the level needed for immunity.

Jenkins and others said it's entirely possible that an effective vaccine will arrive before coronavirus antibody studies are completed, helping answer some of the key questions. Vaccines spur the production of antibodies, and a number of coronavirus vaccines are now being tested around the world.

In the meantime, experts say antibody tests are useful for two things: Large studies in the general population to see how widely the coronavirus has spread, and screening people who may be able to donate their antibody-rich blood plasma, which is used as an experimental treatment for COVID-19.

But those uses were not the focus of White House briefings last spring, which attracted between 8 million and 10 million cable TV viewers daily, according to Nielsen. A spokesperson for the White House coronavirus task force did not provide a response to requests for comment.

Expecting massive demand, the Food and Drug Administration chose a "flood-the-zone" strategy, allowing more than 170 tests to launch with little oversight.

At the same time, Trump highlighted his administration's "fantastic progress" bringing antibody tests to market, some officials were raising concerns. Reports of European governments forced to discard millions of faulty tests raised alarms.

"We're going to be very careful to make sure that when we tell you you're likely immune from the disease ... the test really said that," said Admiral Brett Giroir, the administration's "testing czar."

The FDA pulled back on its lax policy for antibody tests in May, requiring companies to begin submitting data on accuracy. The FDA has authorized about 40 thus far, while dozens more await review.

Despite the precautions from regulators, some testing companies continue to advertise the tests for workers and others. Big laboratories, including LabCorp and Quest, offer the tests to employers, along with other services like temperature checks.

"We are aware of the CDC's guidance," Quest spokeswoman Kimberly Gorode said in a statement. "That is why we recommend that employers use antibody testing as part of a holistic approach to bringing their employees back to the office."

LabCorp said in a statement: "As knowledge grows there may be benefit in having access to this information."

At testing sites in New York City in April, doctors with Somos — a medical non-profit serving low-income communities — told people who tested positive for antibodies that they could safely return to work, although they acknowledged "nothing is 100%." In a recent interview, the group's founder, Dr. Ramon Tallaj, defended the testing. He said the workers would have been expected to go back anyway. The antibody tests simply provided "one extra layer of protection," he said.

The CDC and state public health agencies continue to use antibody testing to track the spread of the virus in the U.S. So far, in most areas studied, fewer than 5% of the population have antibodies. That's far below the levels that most experts think will be needed for herd immunity against coronavirus, underscoring the need for a vaccine.

For now, Jenkins doesn't recommend spending the money to get tested for antibodies unless a doctor recommends it.

"Even the research community can't really tell you what the result means," Jenkins said.

This story has been updated to correct the first name of the official with New York City's Public Health Laboratory. It is Jennifer, not Allison. It also corrects the spelling of Marc Jenkin's first name. It is Marc, not Mark.

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP_FDAAwriter

AP videojournalist Marshall Ritzel in New York contributed to this report

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Hospital: Russia's Alexei Navalny out of coma, is responsive

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Poisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's condition has improved, allowing doctors to take him out of an induced coma, the German hospital treating him said Monday.

Navalny, a fierce, high-profile critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was flown to Germany last month after falling ill on Aug. 20 on a domestic flight in Russia. German chemical weapons experts say tests show the 44-year-old was poisoned with a Soviet-era nerve agent, prompting the German government last week to demand that Russia investigate the case.

"The patient has been removed from his medically induced coma and is being weaned off mechanical ventilation," Berlin's Charite hospital said in a statement. "He is responding to verbal stimuli. It remains too early to gauge the potential long-term effects of his severe poisoning."

It added that the decision to publicly release details of his condition was made in consultation with Navalny's wife.

Navalny had been in an induced coma in the Berlin hospital since he was flown to Germany on Aug. 22 for treatment.

News of his gradual recovery came as German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office indicated that she might be willing to rethink the fate of a controversial German-Russian gas pipeline project — a sign of Berlin's growing frustration over Moscow's stonewalling about the Navalny case.

German authorities said last week that tests showed "proof without doubt" that Navalny was poisoned with a chemical nerve agent from the Novichok group. British authorities identified the Soviet-era Novichok as the poison used on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England in 2018.

Many countries joined Germany in calling for a full investigation after the revelation, with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson last week calling the use of a chemical weapon "outrageous." White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said that the poisoning was "completely reprehensible" and that the U.S. was "working with our allies and the international community to hold those in Russia accountable."

On Monday, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab summoned Russia's ambassador to register his "deep concern about the poisoning," he said on Twitter.

"It's completely unacceptable that a banned chemical weapon has been used and Russia must hold a full, transparent investigation," Raab said, while greeting the news that Navalny had been taken out of the medically-induced coma.

Russia has denied that the Kremlin was involved in poisoning Navalny and accused Germany failing to provide evidence about the poisoning that it requested in late August.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Sunday that the Russian reaction could determine whether Germany changes its long-standing backing for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which will bring Russian gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine.

"The chancellor also believes that it's wrong to rule anything out," Merkel spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters Monday.

Previously, Merkel had insisted on "decoupling" the Navalny case from the pipeline project that is strongly opposed by the U.S. and strongly favored by Russia.

In August, three U.S. Republican senators threatened sanctions against the operator of a German Baltic Sea port for its role as a staging post for ships involved in building Nord Stream 2.

Seibert cautioned that it was premature to expect Moscow to respond to the request for help with the Navalny probe within a few days, but made it clear that Berlin wants answers soon.

"I can't express a clear, time-limited expectation, except that we are certainly not talking about months or the end of the year," he said.

German diplomats rejected the Russian suggestion that Berlin was to blame for any delay in investigating the case, noting that Navalny was first treated for suspected poisoning in the Siberian city of Omsk on Aug. 20.

"All evidence, witnesses, traces and so forth are in the place where the crime was committed, presumably somewhere in Siberia," said German Foreign Ministry spokesman Christofer Burger.

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The co-leader of Germany's opposition Green party, Robert Habeck, called on the government to take a stronger stance and "bury" the pipeline project.

The project "divides Europe, it is economically nonsensical and oversized, and it is wrong in security policy terms," Habeck said. Completing it "would mean that Russia can do what it wants. This signal must not be sent."

Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian envoy to international organizations in Vienna, voiced suspicions about the timing of demands to link the pipeline with the Navalny case.

"Suspicious coincidence of Navalny case and the final stage of Nord Stream 2 construction, which some states desperately want to be closed. I am not fond of conspiracy theories but it is obvious that the tragic events with Navalny are very timely and helpful for opponents of NS2," he tweeted.

Geir Moulson and David Rising in Berlin and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Handshakes at US Open rare but, as Djokovic shows, do happen

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When he was disqualified from the U.S. Open for unintentionally hitting a line judge with a ball after losing a point, Novak Djokovic walked to the sideline and extended his right arm toward his fourth-round foe, Pablo Carreño Busta.

Carreño Busta didn't hesitate after Sunday's stunning default to grasp Djokovic's hand — that is, after all, the standard way tennis players show sportsmanship and mutual respect at the end of a match, usually at the net.

Standard in normal times, anyway. Less so in today's socially distanced, coronavirus-compromised world, where the customary has become taboo. So handshakes and hugs are few and far between at the U.S. Open — even as NHL playoff series still are ending with the traditional handshake lines and walkoff wins and a no-hitter in Major League Baseball inspired full-contact celebrations reminiscent of the good ol' days.

"You've spent your whole career doing things one way," said two-time major finalist Kevin Anderson, a South African. "But we have to make an adjustment. It's obviously indicative of much larger things at play."

So over these unique two weeks at Flushing Meadows -- where there is regular on-site COVID-19 testing, spectators are banned, masks are required for everyone except when eating, and players have to fetch their own towels during matches — the popular replacement gesture at match's end is a racket tap.

"The point gets across," said Jessica Pegula, a 63rd-ranked American who reached the third round.

Generally, one player holds the racket vertically, with the strings facing the winner, who then touches that waiting racket face with the edge of the frame.

That doesn't resolve how to replace a handshake with the chair umpire after a match; some players use their racket to pat one of the official's shoes.

It's quite different from the human contact that likely followed just about every match every U.S. Open entrant ever has played, whether as kids in a public park or as well-paid pros on the Grand Slam stage.

"For me, it's actually fine," said Elise Mertens, a Belgian seeded 16th and scheduled to face Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin on Monday. "I mean, that's the circumstances we are dealing with. So I'm trying to adapt. Everybody's trying to adapt."

Denis Shapovalov, the 12th-seeded Canadian who will face Carreño Busta in the quarterfinals, found the whole thing "a little bit strange," and Tennys Sandgren, an American who lost in Week 1, called it "just not the same."

Some find it harder than others to shake off the instinct to shake.

When Frances Tiafoe — a 22-year-old who grew up in Maryland and was to play 2019 U.S. Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev on Monday — played his first match after tennis resumed from its virus-forced hiatus, he and opponent Andy Murray each extended an arm over the net.

They avoided touching hands but wound up caught somewhere between a fist bump and a forearm smash.

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"We didn't know what to do. It was an awkward moment," Tiafoe said in an interview after that match at the Western & Southern Open, held last month at the same site as the U.S. Open. "Everyone's trying to figure it out and get used to it."

Apparently, Tiafoe still is trying.

When he reached the fourth round at Flushing Meadows for the first time by beating his pal Marton Fucsovics of Hungary 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 on Saturday, Tiafoe went ahead and reached out to clasp hands up at the net. Fucsovics responded in kind, and they both then tapped the other on the chest.

"I was a bit surprised," Fucsovics said. "But I am good friends with Frances. I hope he doesn't have COVID-19 and we won't have any problems."

Well, as it happens, Tiafoe did test positive for the coronavirus in July while participating in an exhibition event in Atlanta and had to withdraw. Tiafoe said he "felt bad for four or five days" but doesn't have any after-effects now.

Last week in New York, a pair of Americans so close away from the court that each attended the other's wedding, No. 16 seed John Isner and Steve Johnson, shook hands after Johnson won in a fifth-set tiebreaker.

"Yeah, I'll probably get defaulted for that. Got to be careful," Johnson joked, then explained precisely what went through his mind as he walked to the net after the 3-hour, 50-minute encounter: "I feel like a racket tap at the end of that doesn't do it justice."

No need to worry about being punished, Steve.

The U.S. Tennis Association did not institute any sort of formal policy or rule governing post-match interactions, even if there are signs around the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center that say, "We're Back! But hugging isn't. Some ways to say hello: virtual hugs; quick elbow taps. Please avoid: hugs; fist bumps."

"This is something that has become part of normal interaction and has carried over onto the court," USTA spokesman Brendan McIntyre said. "There would be no penalty or fine for shaking hands."

Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

More AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/apf-Tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Stalled by pandemic, migrants press in quest for better life

By JUAN ZAMORANO Associated Press

LAJAS BLANCAS, Panama (AP) — Duperat Laurette fled Haiti after her country's massive 2010 earthquake, making her way first to the Dominican Republic, then Chile and five years later to Panama, all with the dream of reaching the U.S. and finding a job to help support 14 siblings left behind in Haiti.

The coronavirus finally stopped her.

Panama, the slender bottleneck between the North and South American continents, is a transit point for virtually every migrant heading from South America to the United States by land and it closed its borders on March 16 to halt the spread of COVID-19. The closure left nearly 2,000 migrants from Haiti and a handful of African and Asian countries stuck in camps in the jungle along Panama's northern and southern borders.

They are among hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of migrants stranded in countries around the world because of virus-related border closures.

Thousands of temporary workers from around Asia were stuck outside New Zealand when that country closed its borders. Other Asian workers got stranded in Moscow airports. Migrants have also been left in makeshift conditions in the Sahara Desert after being expelled without warning from detention centers in Algeria and Libya.

The migrants in Panama say they know the United States has effectively suspended its asylum process at the southern border, but they want to keep heading there anyway, in the hope that they can somehow get in.

Laurette, 45, and her husband arrived at the Panamanian border with Colombia seven months ago and have advanced no farther. There are no opportunities for work in the jungle, and she and her husband

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have exhausted their money.

When she was in another camp, Laurette was taken to the hospital for what doctors said was a fibroid tumor that gave her belly pains and caused her to lose weight.

"They brought me to the hospital to operate, but they never did," she said. "They said there was no space for the operation, the hospital is full with cases of COVID-19."

Still, the couple have rejected Panama's offers of free flights home. Many of the migrants left their native countries years ago and cannot imagine returning worse off than they were before.

"I'm still sick. I don't know what I'm going to do," Laurette said in her native Kreyol.

Tensions have been rising here in Lajas Blancas where about 200 migrants wait, as well as in nearby Peñitas, where some of nearly 1,100 migrants were accused last month by police of setting fire to tents holding medical supplies at another camp. Eight migrants have been jailed in that incident and could face deportation.

Jean Bernadeau hoisted a young girl up and pointed to the welts mosquito bites have left on her legs. "We know there is a strong illness out there," he said. "We can't stay here forever."

"The problem here is always that we have a lot of children, pregnant women," said Bernadeau, another Haitian who arrived from Chile. He had lived there for five years and saved \$4,000 to continue his journey, but that money is gone now. "Here we live like prisoners in a jail."

The flow of migrants through the dense and dangerous Darien jungle has been going strong for more than a decade. This is the first time authorities have stopped it for an international health emergency.

In 2015 and 2016, a huge influx of Cuban migrants tried to make it to the U.S. border before the end of a U.S. policy that favored them. That situation forced Central American nations to fly migrants along portions of their route.

Panama saw a wave of migrants in early 2019 that led to agreements with neighboring Costa Rica to allow their free passage. Most of those stuck in Panama fled Haiti after the earthquake that left the country in ruins. Many spent years working in Brazil and Chile, saving money to continue north.

In Lajas Blancas, the migrants live in a grassy field under tarps on wooden platforms packed tight between a dirt road and the brown waters of a river. A row of portable toilets sit across the road, and jungle surrounds them. They prepare their food over wood fires. Border police guard the entrance to the camp.

Jean Edoly, a 30-year-old Haitian, is there with his wife and two children, ages 2 and 1, who were born in Chile. "They don't feed us well. We're fed like dogs," he said.

Panama's government says it is providing migrants with humanitarian support. It has built, along with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, a new camp with better shelter on the outskirts of Metetí, where it hopes to soon move 400 migrants, especially families with young children.

"The Panamanian government asks them to remain calm. We've already made it six months. What remains is little. Light can be seen at the end of the tunnel," Public Security Minister Juan Pino said during a recent visit to the area.

Panama has reported more than 92,000 infections and 2,000 deaths from COVID-19. In recent weeks, infections have been stabilizing and deaths declining. The government recently announced a plan to allow the reopening of more economic activity and a lifting of travel restrictions beginning Sept. 7.

In Lajas Blancas, the migrants did not wear masks or practice social distancing, but Pino said there have been no more than 10 infections among them.

Panama proposed the flights back to Haiti in early August with support from the International Organization for Migration. But most migrants were not interested, Pino said.

Edoly dismissed that option as "impossible."

"We have a destiny. We have a dream to realize," he said, reciting a list of the countries migrants had traveled through. "We want to give our children a better life."

Timeline of Julian Assange's legal battles over past decade

Associated Press undefined

LONDON (AP) — The extradition hearing of Julian Assange, the founder of anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks, opened in London on Monday, the latest development in a long legal saga. Here is a look at key events.

— August 2010: Swedish prosecutors issue arrest warrant for Assange based on one woman's allegation of rape and another's allegation of molestation. The warrant was withdrawn shortly afterward, with prosecutors citing insufficient evidence for the rape allegation. Assange denies the allegations.

— September 2010: Sweden's director of prosecutions reopens the rape investigation. Assange leaves Sweden for Britain Sept. 27.

— November 2010: Swedish police issue an international arrest warrant for Assange.

— December 2010: Assange surrenders to police in London and is detained pending an extradition hearing. High Court grants Assange bail on Dec. 16.

— Feb. 24, 2011: District court in Britain rules Assange should be extradited to Sweden.

— Dec. 5, 2011: Assange is granted an appeal to the Supreme Court.

— May 30, 2012: Supreme Court rejects Assange's appeal.

— June 2012: Assange asks the Supreme Court to reopen the case; the court refuses. Assange enters Ecuadorian Embassy in central London, seeking asylum on June 19. Police set up round-the-clock guard to arrest him if he steps outside.

— Aug. 16, 2012: Assange is granted political asylum by Ecuador.

— July 2014: Assange loses his bid to have an arrest warrant issued in Sweden against him canceled. A judge in Stockholm upholds the warrant alleging sexual offences against two women.

— March 2015: Swedish prosecutors ask to question Assange at the Ecuadorian embassy.

— Aug. 13, 2015: Swedish prosecutors drop investigations into some allegations against Assange because of the statute of limitations; an investigation into a rape allegation remains active.

— Oct. 12, 2015: Metropolitan Police end their 24-hour guard outside the Ecuadorean embassy but say they'll arrest Assange if he leaves - ending a three-year police operation estimated to have cost more than 12 million pounds (\$17 million).

— Feb. 5, 2016: Assange claims "total vindication" as the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention finds that he has been unlawfully detained and recommends he be immediately freed and given compensation. British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond calls the finding "frankly ridiculous."

— April 6, 2017: After Assange makes some comments on Twitter, Ecuador's president-elect, Lenin Moreno, warns Assange that, as a condition of asylum granted in 2012, he is not allowed to meddle in politics.

— May 19, 2017: Swedish prosecutors drop their investigation into a rape allegation against Assange, and the European arrest warrant is withdrawn because there is no prospect in the "foreseeable future" of bringing Assange to Sweden - as he is inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Prosecutors stress that Assange had not been found innocent. British police say he is still wanted for jumping bail in 2012.

— September 2018: Ecuador's president says his country and Britain are working on a legal solution to allow Assange to leave the embassy in "the medium term."

— October 2018: Assange seeks a court injunction pressing Ecuador to provide him basic rights he said the country agreed to when it first granted him asylum.

— November 2018: A U.S. court filing that appears to inadvertently reveal the existence of a sealed criminal case against Assange is discovered by a researcher. No details are confirmed.

— April 2, 2019: Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno blames WikiLeaks for recent allegations of corruption.

— April 11, 2019: London police arrest Assange at the Ecuadorian embassy for breaching bail conditions in 2012, as well as on behalf of U.S. authorities, shortly after Ecuador's government withdrew his asylum status.

— May 1, 2019: Assange is sentenced to 50 weeks in prison for jumping bail in 2012.

— May 13, 2019: Sweden reopens rape investigation.

— Nov. 19, 2019: Swedish prosecutor drops rape investigation.

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- Feb. 24, 2020: Assange extradition hearing opens with plans to continue hold second hearing in May.
- May 4, 2020: Judge delays extradition hearing amid COVID-19 pandemic.
- June 25, 2020: US files new indictment against Assange that prosecutors say underscores Assange's efforts to procure and release classified information.

Typhoon lashes South Korea after battering Japanese islands

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A powerful typhoon damaged buildings, flooded roads and knocked out power to thousands of homes in South Korea on Monday after battering islands in southern Japan, killing one person and injuring dozens of others, before weakening as it passed North Korea.

The Korea Meteorological Administration downgraded Typhoon Haishen to a tropical storm Monday night as it made landfall near the North Korean coastal city of Hamhung. During its period as a typhoon, Haishen packed maximum winds of about 130 kilometers (80 miles) per hour as it barreled through South Korea's southern and eastern regions in the morning.

Japanese disaster management officials in Kagoshima said a woman in her 70s died of a head injury after falling into a roadside ditch while evacuating from a coastal town as Haishen lashed southwestern Japan over the weekend with strong winds and rain. Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said at least 38 other people were injured, five of them seriously. Schools and department stores were closed in Hiroshima and other cities in the country's southwest.

Damage caused by the typhoon was less than feared because it took a path farther from the coast and weakened more quickly than expected, officials said.

In South Korea, at least two people were missing — one after getting swept away by water in a drainage channel at a limestone mine in the eastern town of Samcheok and the other while trying to cross a small river on a tractor in the southeastern town of Uljin.

At least five people were hurt, including one in Busan who sustained light injuries after a car flipped over in strong winds, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety said.

At least 110 homes were destroyed or flooded, while cars struggled to navigate flooded roads in Ulsan and other coastal cities such as Busan, Sokcho and Gangneung. Emergency workers scrambled to clean up toppled trees and damaged traffic signs, buildings, port facilities and other structures.

The storm also destroyed or sank around 80 fishing boats, and caused generating turbines at two nuclear reactors in the southeastern city of Gyeongju to automatically stop. No leakage of radioactive materials was detected.

Hundreds of flights in and out of the southern island province of Jeju and across the mainland were canceled. Some bridges and railroad sections were shut down, thousands of fishing boats and other vessels were moved to safety, and more than 3,000 residents in the southern mainland regions were evacuated due to the possibility of landslides and other concerns.

Workers by Monday evening completed restoring power to 75,237 households that lost electricity in the southern mainland areas and Jeju.

Haishen, which means "sea god" in Chinese, plowed through Okinawa and other southern Japanese islands over the weekend. Traffic was still paralyzed in places, bullet train service was suspended and most domestic flights in and out of airports in southwestern Japan were canceled Monday.

Regional officials in Miyazaki said rescue workers were looking for four people missing after a mudslide hit the mountainous village of Shiiba earlier Monday. A fifth person who was rescued at the site was seriously injured.

Electricity was restored to thousands of homes in Japan, but more than 340,000 others were still without power. Nearly 4 million people in Japan were still advised to evacuate as of Monday afternoon.

The storm by late Monday was expected to reach North Korea's northeastern region, which was battered by Typhoon Maysak last week, inflicting further pain on an economy ravaged by U.S.-led sanctions, border closures from the coronavirus pandemic and chronic food shortages.

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North Korean TV aired video of widespread flooding in the eastern coastal city of Wonsan and nearby Tongchon, but the country's state media didn't immediately report any casualties caused by Haishen.

The North's state media earlier said leader Kim Jong Un visited typhoon-stricken areas, fired a top regional official for poor readiness, and promised to send 12,000 workers from Pyongyang to help with recovery efforts. The North said Maysak destroyed more than 1,000 houses and inundated public buildings and farmland.

Maysak damaged roads and buildings and left at least one person dead in South Korea. In addition, a livestock cargo ship sank off Japan's coast as Maysak passed. Two of its 43 crew members were rescued and one body was recovered before the search was halted because of Haishen. An aerial search resumed later Monday after Haishen passed the area. The ship was transporting 5,800 cows from New Zealand to China.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo.

In battlegrounds, absentee ballot rejections could triple

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Thousands of absentee ballots get rejected in every presidential election. This year, that problem could be much worse and potentially pivotal in hotly contested battleground states.

With the coronavirus creating a surge in mail-in balloting and postal delays reported across the country, the number of rejected ballots in November is projected to be significantly higher than previous elections.

If ballots are rejected at the same rate as during this year's primaries, up to three times as many voters in November could be disenfranchised in key battleground states when compared to the last presidential election, according to an Associated Press analysis of rejected ballots. It could be even more pronounced in some urban areas where Democratic votes are concentrated and ballot rejection rates trended higher during this year's primaries.

"It is the number one thing that keeps me up at night — the idea that voters will do everything they can to ensure their ballot is returned on time and the system will still fail them," said Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson.

Ballot rejections occur even under the best of circumstances. They go uncounted because they arrived too late in the mail, voters forgot to sign them or signatures didn't match the one on file at local election offices.

Those problems could be compounded this year as millions of voters cast mail-in ballots for the first time because of election changes forced by the coronavirus. Large numbers of uncounted ballots could be used to sow doubts about the election; President Donald Trump has been claiming for months without evidence that widespread mail-in voting will lead to fraud.

The sudden leap is worrisome: 22 states are going from absentee ballots comprising less than 10% of all ballots four years ago to perhaps half or more this November. Pennsylvania is among them: Nearly 51% of all votes cast during its June primary were mail-in.

If voter turnout is the same as 2016 and the ballot rejection rate equals the 1.4% from this year's primary, nearly 43,000 voters in Pennsylvania could be disenfranchised this fall, according to AP's analysis. That's almost the same number of votes by which Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton in the state four years ago, when some 2,100 ballots were rejected.

In Philadelphia, a far higher percentage of absentee ballots cast in June were rejected — 3.9%. Most of those arrived too late to be counted, even though Gov. Tom Wolf extended the deadline by a week.

Amy Campbell, a 26-year-old University of Pennsylvania medical student, had her ballot rejected for another reason: a missing signature.

Campbell is upset she didn't have a chance to fix her ballot. She received an email two days after the vote count ended telling her officials "couldn't obtain (her) required signature."

"The first communication I got from the state was basically to tell me that my ballot had been canceled,"

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Campbell said.

Philadelphia Board of Elections spokesman Nick Custodio said that's not supposed to happen, but couldn't explain why it did.

Vote-by-mail rejections could be of special concern to Democrats, who have seen a surge in absentee ballot applications this year. In Pennsylvania, for example, more than twice as many Democrats as Republicans voted by mail in the June primary.

Only 21 states have defined procedures for notifying voters if absentee ballots are rejected so they have a chance to fix it.

For its analysis, the AP also collected absentee ballot data from Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. Based on the percentage of those ballots cast in each state's primary this year, between 185,000 and 292,000 voters in the seven states examined could be disenfranchised if November's turnout matches that of four years ago and the rejection rate remains flat. That compares to nearly 87,000 ballots rejected in those states in 2016.

The ballot rejections could be pivotal in close races. In 2016, Trump won Wisconsin by roughly 23,000 votes.

Reasons for rejection can vary. In a few states, a witness or notary must sign the ballot envelope for the ballot to be valid. Where ballots received after Election Day are counted, a legible postmark from that day is generally required.

"There could be a lot of people who are voting this way for the first time, and they tend to make the errors that lead to lost votes," said Larry Norden, an elections expert with the Brennan Center for Justice.

New, young, Black and Hispanic voters — who tend to favor Democratic candidates — are disproportionately affected, according to research by University of Florida political scientist Daniel Smith. All have had absentee ballots rejected at higher rates than white and more experienced mail-in voters.

Being able to notify voters of problems in time to fix them will be difficult enough for understaffed election offices. It doesn't help that election officials in some states, including Michigan and Pennsylvania, are not allowed to begin looking at absentee ballots until Election Day. That leaves a narrow window for identifying problems and allowing voters to fix them.

Experts say voters must be diligent about requesting and returning absentee ballots well ahead of Election Day; the Postal Service advises allowing seven days for a ballot to reach an election office.

Drop boxes can help. Michigan, Georgia, Colorado and Arizona are among states adding more. Colorado, which has been mailing ballots to all voters since 2013, saw a slight increase in rejections from about 1% in 2016 to 1.6% in this year's primary; the rejection rate doubled in Denver but still remained below 2%.

Joe Bernal, a 31-year-old tech analyst in Miami, expects to be driving to the nearest drop box to deliver his ballot ahead of Nov. 3. His ballot was rejected in Florida's March presidential primary for arriving after the deadline, even though Bernal said he mailed it at least three weeks before.

Bernal, who lost an aunt to COVID-19, said he is unwilling to vote in person: "I'm asthmatic. I don't want to have to risk it."

But drop boxes only solve one problem. The process of authenticating voter signatures on ballot envelopes — an anti-fraud measure — is so troublesome that lawsuits have been filed seeking to end the practice barring an adequate remedy.

Jennifer Morrell, a former election official in Utah and Colorado, said voters need to be certain they will be given an opportunity to fix a problem. Some jurisdictions are adding software that quickly alerts voters via text or email, but Morrell said the problem is being unevenly addressed.

"States that are really new to this, most likely they will just be sending out a letter in the mail and hope the voter gets it in time and fills it out," she said.

That wasn't the case for Tasha Young, a 43-year-old teacher in metro Atlanta who found a letter from her local election office buried in a pile of mail after Georgia's primary in June. It said she had failed to sign her ballot, but by then it was too late for her to submit the required affidavit.

She plans to vote in person in November.

"For one thing, I don't want to have to worry about a deadline or missing a signature," Young said.

Bajak reported from Boston.

During pandemic, Black families put trust in Black doctors

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/ Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Dr. Janice Bacon was exactly the person Kay McField hoped to talk to when she found herself spending most of her days in bed, feeling too depressed to get up as the coronavirus pandemic threatened those around her.

As she watched those closest to her test positive for the virus — a goddaughter and her uncle, whom she cares for, among them — McField said she was terrified that she or her daughter, who both suffer from autoimmune diseases, would fall ill. When she wasn't in bed, the 51-year-old single mother was cleaning her house compulsively.

"It was just this constant panic," she said, her arms pressed to her chest. "I wanted to talk to someone I knew was going to listen, who I could trust."

A Black primary care physician practicing in Mississippi for nearly four decades, Bacon works at an all-African American-run trio of community health centers in Hinds County, where the population is overwhelmingly Black — and where the most coronavirus cases have been reported in the state.

Most of the families that Bacon and the more than 50 other doctors, nurses and social workers serve are African American, low-income and living with health conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma that are more common among Black Americans. Even before the coronavirus, many were dealing with depression and anxiety, Bacon said.

During the pandemic, those problems have been exacerbated. Many clinic patients are essential workers expected to work in-person even as coronavirus cases have skyrocketed in Mississippi. While testing is free for community health center patients, delays are a major issue, Bacon said, with some families waiting up to two weeks for results.

Bacon said she has seen people scrape together \$187 to pay for a rapid test at other clinics that don't accept Medicaid, in hopes of returning to work faster and not losing their jobs.

"There's this feeling of, 'I just can't handle it all,'" Bacon said. "We are seeing serious mental health consequences."

Meanwhile, families are struggling to find child care and put food on the table. Two of the largest school districts in the area decided to start virtually, creating more barriers for families that don't have internet access, or if they do, don't know how to use devices for online learning or can't afford them.

Research suggests Black patients have better outcomes when treated by Black doctors and nurses. Yet, only 5% of doctors nationwide are Black, and only 2% are Black women, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The Central Mississippi Health Services clinic where Bacon works is on the campus of Tougaloo College, a historically Black institution that was a gathering place for civil rights activists in the 1960s. As part of the national network of community health centers, it receives federal funding to serve communities designated as medically under-served areas, with fees adjusted based on ability to pay.

Over generations, Bacon has built trust in a community generally skeptical of the health care system and made her Black patients feel they have a safe place to go for medical care.

"It's meaningful to be taken care of by someone who looks like you, who understands you," McField said. "Other doctors go into the exam room, and they don't ask your name. And me, when I go there and be treated that way, I'm not going back no more."

Raised 90 miles from Jackson in Natchez, Mississippi, Bacon suffered from severe asthma. Her pediatrician would treat her at his house when she would have attacks, even in the middle of the night. That inspired her to become a community doctor.

In her office, Bacon has a portrait of Michelle and Barack Obama on the wall, and photos of her patients

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on a bulletin board. McField's daughter Ella's high school graduation photo is among them. Ella, who is starting college this fall, says she has wanted to be a doctor or a nurse since she was little because of Bacon.

Bacon has cared for McField's family for generations. She was the doctor for McField's mother and her 10 siblings, and now she looks after their children. McField said her brother drove three hours from Memphis so his children could be seen by Bacon.

When she has gone elsewhere for medical care, McField said, she has been talked down to, misdiagnosed or dismissed by doctors. Bacon said there is still a lot of implicit bias in the health care system, and she has seen how it hurts her patients.

When McField opened up to Bacon about her depression during the pandemic, the doctor introduced her to a social worker who helped her find coping strategies — writing in a journal, taking a break from watching the news and praying. She said she's doing a lot better.

Clinic staff members say they see their role as more than treating their patients' physical health. They work with food banks, churches and other social services to make sure people have access to food and clean drinking water while in isolation, as well as transportation when they can venture out again.

"They can get your high blood pressure medication refilled, and then come down the hallway and talk about why it was up 20 points this week," said social worker Chinnika Crisler. "Maybe it's because the unemployment stimulus just ended, and 'I really don't know how to pay my rent next month, so now I'm not sleeping.'"

The pandemic has made running some of the center's normal programming challenging. Nutrition sessions for preteens and their parents at risk for obesity were halted in person. Respite care for parents of children with significant health conditions — something Bacon knows is desperately needed right now — has been on pause until providers find a safe way to visit patients' homes.

But there is still much to do. On one recent day, Crisler was helping a single mother of three apply for benefits through the Family and Medical Leave Act because she wasn't able to balance working and taking care of her three kids at home by herself.

Clinician and social worker Lisa Williams said that although the pandemic has made a lot of the problems that patients deal with worse, they aren't anything new.

"People have been struggling for a long, long time," she said.

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.

Belarus activists go missing, colleagues fear detention

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A leading opposition activist in Belarus and two other members of an opposition council went missing Monday, raising fears they were detained as authorities seek to squelch nearly a month of protests against the re-election of the country's authoritarian leader.

Maria Kolesnikova, a member of the Coordination Council created by the opposition to facilitate talks with President Alexander Lukashenko on a transition of power, was reportedly put on a minibus in the capital, Minsk, and driven away by unidentified people. Last week, Kolesnikova announced the creation of a new opposition party.

Her disappearance follows a massive rally Sunday in Minsk that drew an estimated 100,000 protesters demanding the resignation of Lukashenko, who extended his 26-year rule in an Aug. 9 election that the opposition and some poll workers say was rigged.

Sunday's demonstrations in Minsk and other cities went on despite authorities warning that participants could face reprisals. The Interior Ministry said 633 people were detained Sunday for taking part in unsanctioned protests.

Council member Maxim Znak said Kolesnikova's colleagues fear she was detained and two other council

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members also couldn't be reached Monday.

The Belarusian Interior Ministry said it hasn't detained Kolesnikova but the State Security Committee that still goes under the Soviet-era name KGB has kept mum.

The Coordination Council denounced what it described as "methods of terror used by the government instead of a dialogue with society."

"Such methods are unlawful and will only exacerbate the situation in the country, deepen the crisis and fuel more protests," it said in a statement.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius tweeted that Kolesnikova's disappearance is part of the Belarusian government's effort to "cynically eliminate one by one" the leaders of the protests and called for her immediate release.

After a brutal crackdown on protesters in the first few days after the vote that stoked international outrage and swelled the ranks of protesters, authorities in Belarus have switched to threats and selective arrests of opposition activists and demonstrators.

German government spokesman Steffen Seibert strongly condemned all the arrests in Belarus, noting that "the only response that Lukashenko and his people seem to have for (the protesters) at the moment is naked violence."

"We demand the immediate release of all those who were arrested before the elections, on the day of the election and since the election, simply for exerting their democratic, self-evidential rights as citizens," he said.

Targeting the protest leaders, Belarusian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe of the Coordination Council that opposition activists set up after the election to try to negotiate a transition of power.

Two council member, Sergei Dylevsky and Olga Kovalkova, were given 10-day jail sentences and, after serving them, handed new 15-day prison terms. Kovalkova surfaced in Poland on Saturday, saying the authorities pressured her to leave the country after threatening to keep her in jail for a long time.

Several other council members have been called in for questioning.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the main opposition challenger to Lukashenko in the election, moved to Lithuania a day after the vote under pressure from authorities. She said Monday that Kolesnikova's disappearance marked another attempt by the government to intimidate the opposition.

"It's an attempt to derail the work of the Coordination Council, but we will not be stopped," she said. "The more they try to scare us, the more people will take to the streets. We will continue our struggle and push for the release of all political prisoners and a new, fair election."

The former teacher ran against Lukashenko after her husband, a popular blogger, was jailed. Two other top potential challengers were blocked from running. One was jailed on money laundering charges he dismissed as a political vendetta, and another one fled the country with his children before the election, fearing arrest.

Last week, Kolesnikova announced the creation of a new party, Together. She said the move will help overcome the current crisis, but the party founders' call for constitutional changes has stunned some other opposition council members, who argued that it could divert attention from the main goal of getting Lukashenko to step down.

___ Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, Frank Jordans in Berlin and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, contributed to this report.

___ Follow all AP stories on the developments in Belarus at <https://apnews.com/Belarus>

Virus still throwing theme park attendance for a loop

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Theme park operators who spent months installing hand sanitizing stations, figuring out how to disinfect roller coasters seats and checking the temperatures of guests at their gates so they'd come back in the midst of the pandemic are finding many reluctant to return.

Some parks have reduced operating days, slashed ticket prices, and closed early for the year because

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of lower-than-hoped attendance — expectations weren't high to begin with — along with the uncertainty of what's to come with the coronavirus. A few parks have been unable to open their gates at all because of state and local health restrictions.

Disney this week will begin cutting an hour or two out of each day at its four Florida theme parks. It already called off its annual after-hours Halloween party at the Magic Kingdom. Neighboring Universal Orlando also nixed its Halloween Horror Nights.

Amusement parks across the South that had their seasons delayed by virus outbreaks in the spring deal with a second punch with the summer flareups across the Sun Belt. Some, including Kings Dominion in Virginia and Carowinds in North Carolina, never opened and won't this year.

Cedar Fair Entertainment, which operates those two, has reopened just half of its 13 amusement parks and water parks across North America.

The company, based in Ohio, expected attendance to stay at no more than 25% of normal levels through the rest of the year at its parks that are operating, CEO Richard Zimmerman said in early August. Despite the lower numbers, those parks are still able to make a profit, the company said.

Cedar Point, the company's flagship park in Sandusky, Ohio, scaled back to weekends only in mid-August and did away with online admission reservations to manage the daily crowds.

California's parks haven't been open — except for a few food festivals — since mid-March and are pushing the state to issue guidelines on how and when they can allow guests back.

"Disneyland has been ready to roll since July awaiting guidance from the state's governor on what the reopening protocols will be," Jim MacPhee, Walt Disney World's chief operating officer, said two weeks ago.

Kennywood, an amusement park near Pittsburgh, delayed its opening twice this year, cut ticket prices in half and then decided to end its season early on Labor Day.

"It's hard to predict what's going to happen in a few months," said park spokesman Nick Paradise, explaining why they canceled the popular Phantom Fright Nights and Holiday Lights events. "The safest thing is to finish on a high note."

The park's attendance started slow after its July opening but picked up as people began feeling more comfortable with the safety measures in place, he said.

The industry put in long hours just to restart this season, adding constant reminders about social distancing, from decals on the pavement in queues to roving "social distance squads" at Disney World. Six Flags added touch-free bag checks with high-tech, walk-through machines.

Six Flags expects its numbers to rebound when the health crisis settles down, Mike Spanos, the company's CEO said at the end of July. But attendance at its parks around the U.S. has gone up and down depending on whether there are coronavirus surges in those areas, he said.

"We're surveying guests every week and what they're telling us is when they see a flattening of the curve, they want to get out," Spanos said. "And we also see a chunk of guests that are saying when they're comfortable with the vaccine, they want to get out."

Some people opposed to mask-wearing requirements also have stayed away.

"The pushback is diminishing," said George Frantzis, co-owner of Quassy Amusement & Waterpark in Middlebury, Connecticut. "We still get a few everyday who don't believe in it."

While business has remained slow during the week, the park has hit its capacity on a few weekends, he said. "Saturdays have been a little bit busy because there's not a lot else to do out there," Frantzis said.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Sept. 8, the 252nd day of 2020. There are 114 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 8, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford granted a "full, free, and absolute pardon" to former President Richard Nixon covering his entire term in office.

On this date:

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In 1565, a Spanish expedition established the first permanent European settlement in North America at present-day St. Augustine, Fla.

In 1664, the Dutch surrendered New Amsterdam to the British, who renamed it New York.

In 1761, Britain's King George III married Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz a few hours after meeting her for the first time.

In 1892, an early version of "The Pledge of Allegiance," written by Francis Bellamy, appeared in "The Youth's Companion." It went: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

In 1900, Galveston, Texas, was struck by a hurricane that killed an estimated 8,000 people.

In 1935, Sen. Huey P. Long, a Louisiana Democrat, was shot and mortally wounded inside the Louisiana State Capitol; he died two days later. (The assailant was identified as Dr. Carl Weiss, who was gunned down by Long's bodyguards.)

In 1941, the 900-day Siege of Leningrad by German forces began during World War II.

In 1943, during World War II, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower announced Italy's surrender; Nazi Germany denounced Italy's decision as a cowardly act.

In 1964, public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, reopened after being closed for five years by officials attempting to prevent court-ordered racial desegregation.

In 1986, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" began the first of 25 seasons in national syndication.

In 2005, Congress hastened to provide an additional \$51.8 billion for relief and recovery from Hurricane Katrina; President George W. Bush pledged to make it "easy and simple as possible" for uncoun-tered, up-rooted storm victims to collect food stamps and other government benefits.

In 2014, Ray Rice was let go by the Baltimore Ravens and suspended indefinitely by the NFL after a video was released showing the running back striking his then-fiancee, Janay Palmer, in an elevator. (A neutral arbitrator vacated the suspension two months later, but Rice never played in the NFL again.) S. Truett Cathy, the billionaire founder of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain, died in suburban Atlanta at age 93.

Ten years ago: BP took some of the blame for the Gulf oil disaster in an internal report, acknowledging among other things that it had misinterpreted a key pressure test of the well, but also assigned responsibility to its partners on the doomed rig. Israel Tal, a decorated war hero and creator of Israel's renowned "Merkava" tank, died at age 86. Allen Dale June, one of the 29 original Navajo code talkers of World War II, died in Prescott, Arizona, at age 91.

Five years ago: After resisting apologizing for using a personal email account run on a private server to conduct government business as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton shifted course, telling ABC News, "That was a mistake. I'm sorry about that. I take responsibility." Kim Davis, the Rowan County, Kentucky, clerk jailed for refusing to issue marriage licenses to gay couples, was released after five days behind bars, emerging to a hero's welcome from thousands of supporters.

One year ago: Dorian, the storm that had walloped the Bahamas and North Carolina, lashed at far-eastern Canada with hurricane-force winds, knocking out power to hundreds of thousands before weakening and heading into the North Atlantic. Former South Carolina governor and congressman Mark Sanford joined the Republican race against President Donald Trump, saying that there needed to be "a conversation about what it means to be a Republican." (Sanford ended his bid two months later.) Rafael Nadal held off a strong comeback bid to win his 19th Grand Slam title in a five-set U.S. Open final against Daniil Medvedev.

Today's Birthdays: Ventriloquist Willie Tyler is 80. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., is 79. Actor Alan Feinstein is 79. Pop singer Sal Valentino (The Beau Brummels) is 78. Author Ann Beattie is 73. Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis is 70. Cajun singer Zachary Richard (ree-SHARD') is 70. Musician Will Lee is 68. Actor Heather Thomas is 63. Singer Aimee Mann is 60. Pop musician David Steele (Fine Young Cannibals) is 60. Actor Thomas Kretschmann is 58. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marc Gordon (Levert) is 56. Gospel singer Darlene Zschech (chehk) is 55. Alternative country singer Neko (NEE'-koh) Case is 50. TV personality Brooke Burke-Charvet is 49. Actor Martin Freeman is 49. Actor David Arquette is 49. TV-radio personality Kennedy is 48. Rock musician Richard Hughes (Keane) is 45. Actor Larenz Tate is 45. Actor Nathan Corrdy is 43. Rhythm-and-blues singer Pink is 41. Singer-songwriter Eric Hutchinson is 40. Actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas is 39. Rapper Wiz Khalifa is 33. Actor Gaten Matarazzo (TV: "Stranger Things") is 18.