

LA County churches allowed to resume indoor services with restrictions

LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- Los Angeles County is allowing places of worship to resume indoor services, with some restrictions ahead of the Christmas holiday.

The Los Angeles County Health Officer Order was modified Saturday to align with recent Supreme Court rulings for houses of worship. The court ruled that such places are permitted to offer faith-based services both indoors and outdoors with mandatory physical distancing and face coverings over both the nose and mouth that must be worn at all times while on-site. Attendance is not permitted to exceed the number of people who can be accommodated while maintaining a physical distance of six feet between separate households.

Despite the changes, the county still strongly recommended that places of worship continue to hold services outdoors, with physical distancing and face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Religious groups had complained that indoor worship services are completely prohibited for 99.1% of Californians, while food packing and processing, and warehouses have no capacity limits. Liquor and grocery stores have a 50% capacity limit, while big box centers, shopping malls, laundromats and destination centers have 20-25% capacity.

Meanwhile, health officials on Saturday announced 13,756 new COVID-19 cases and 60 more deaths, as Los Angeles County crossed a landmark 600,000 cases

To date, the Department of Public Health has reported a total of 610,372 positive COVID-19 cases and a total of 8,817 coronavirus-related deaths.

On Dec. 11, the county reached 500,000 cases, and since then, more than 100,000 new cases have been reported -- the fastest acceleration of new cases during the pandemic.

A record 5,424 people were hospitalized with the disease on Saturday -- up more than 300 from Friday -- and 21% of these people are in the ICU. Hospital capacity across the county is very limited, and health care workers are hard-pressed to keep up with the need for care.

<https://abc7.com/los-angeles-county-churches-la-are-open-coronavirus/8923189/>