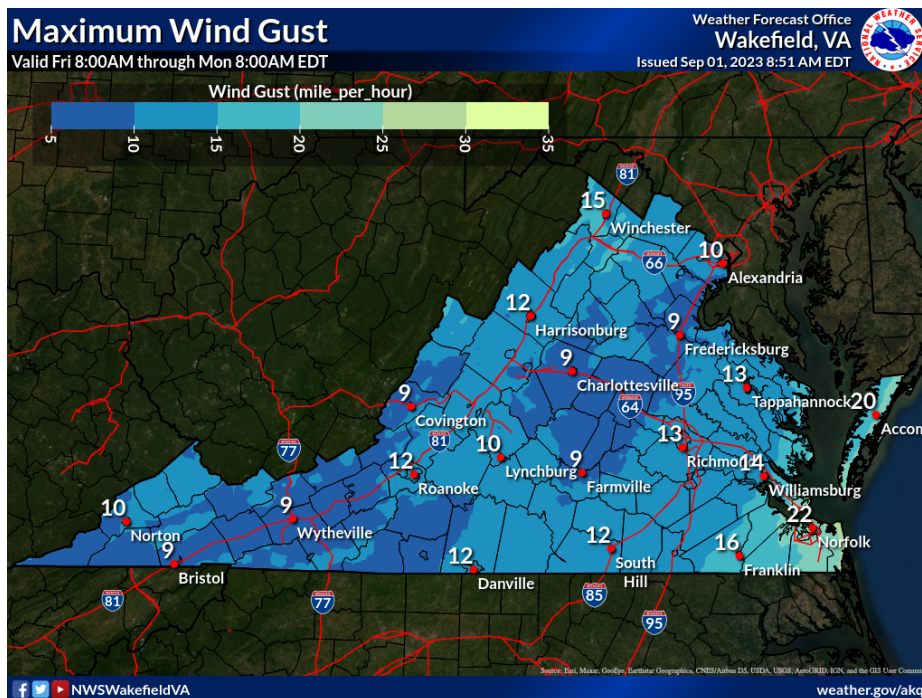


September 1, 2023

Key Takeaways

- COVID-19 indicators continue to increase. While still low, COVID-19 hospital admissions increased 51% in Virginia for the week ending on August 26.
- Due to the increase in COVID-19 indicators and interest, this update will include a section focusing on respiratory illness. This can be found on page two of this report.
- Virginia is feeling the effects of post-tropical cyclone Idalia today. These include high winds and flooding of coastal areas. The storm is also causing hazardous conditions on open water. Two other named Atlantic storms are not expected to approach the U.S. at this time.
- VDH has announced a statewide outbreak of meningococcal disease. Twenty-seven cases have been identified in Eastern, Central, and Southwest Virginia since June 2022.
- San Francisco issued an advisory following an uptick in mpox cases.
- There has been an increase in hospitalizations of children who consumed hemp-derived products.

Key Figures



Source: *National Weather Service*

COVID-19

9%

Chance that the WHO will identify a new COVID-19 Variant of Concern in 2023. (Metaculus forecast)

58%

Chance that the Virginia will experience a COVID-19 surge in 2023. (Metaculus forecast)

Low

VDH categorization of the hospital admission rate for the week ending Aug 26.

Wildfires

695 of 1063

The number of uncontrolled wildfires in Canada, out of the total number of active fires.

Spotlight:
Idalia

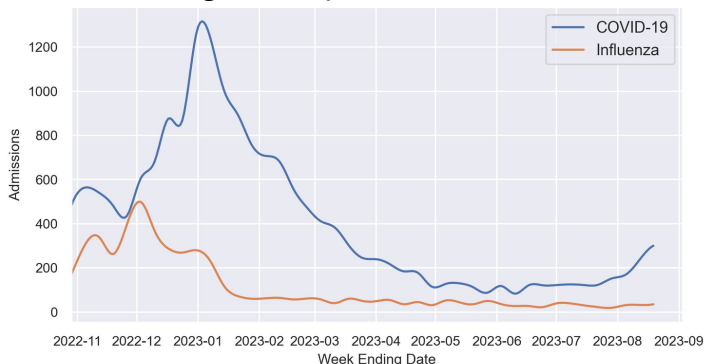
Forecasts are italicized

Respiratory Illness

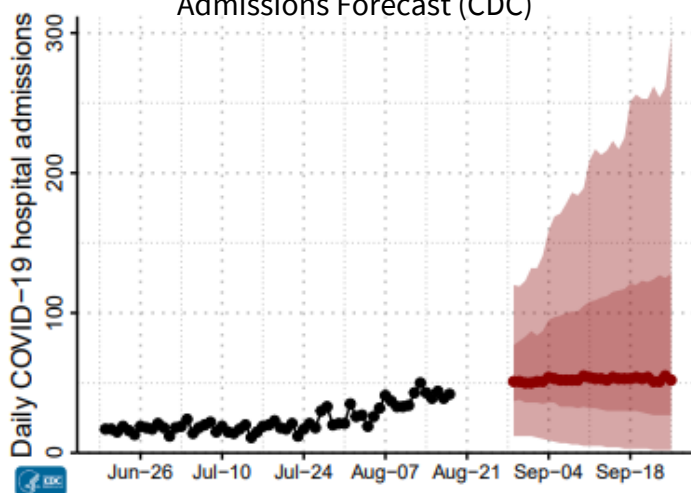
Takeaways

- **COVID-19 indicators continue to rise in Virginia, but remain at relatively low levels.** Weekly hospital admissions rose 51% for the week ending Aug 26, but ended the week at 5.24 admissions per 100k residents. COVID-19 admission rates below 10 per 100k are categorized as “low.” Nationally, hospital admissions rose 19% for the week ending Aug 19.
- **A diverse mix of COVID-19 variants are circulating.** The CDC Nowcast model estimates that 13 variants now account for at least 1% of sequenced samples. The most prolific variant is EG.5 (Eris), which accounts for an estimated 21% of sequenced samples. Notably, the number of sequenced samples has declined, so the CDC no longer estimates current variant mix for individual HHS regions.
- **The CDC continues to monitor Variant BA.2.86.** The variant’s large number of mutations and diverse geographic spread raised concerns that it may show increased immune escape compared to existing variants. Though early, this has not translated into real-world impact yet. It is also too early to assess severity or transmissibility, but there is no evidence of significant increases. BA.2.86 has been detected in 10 countries, including four U.S. states.
- **Influenza season typically begins in October.** As of July 29, influenza-like-illness detected at emergency facilities was lower than during the previous two seasons.
- **The United Kingdom accelerated its autumn vaccine program.** Citing BA.2.86, which has been detected in the UK, the nation will start COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations on Sept. 11, moving up from early October. Influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations are available in Virginia, with the new targeted COVID-19 vaccines expected in mid-September.
- **School districts in two states cancelled in-person classes due to respiratory diseases.** Two districts in Kentucky and one in Texas cited attendance levels and respiratory disease cases for the short-term cancellations. One district also cited stomach viruses.

Virginia Hospital Admissions

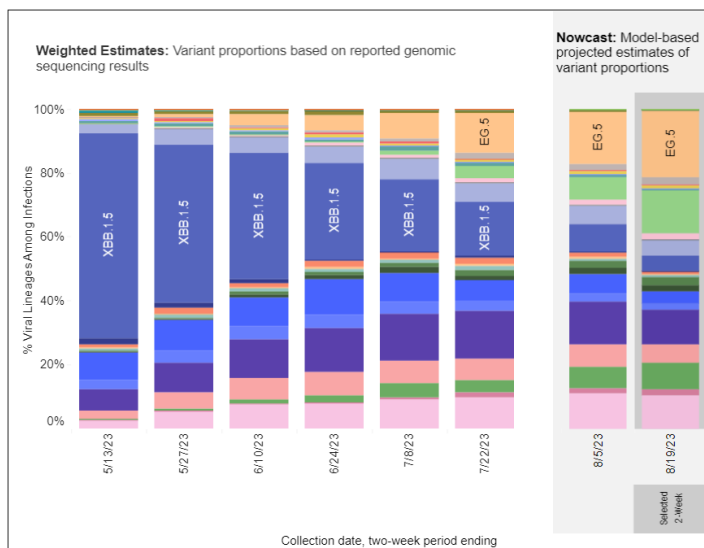


Virginia COVID-19 Hospital Admissions Forecast (CDC)



United States Variant Proportions

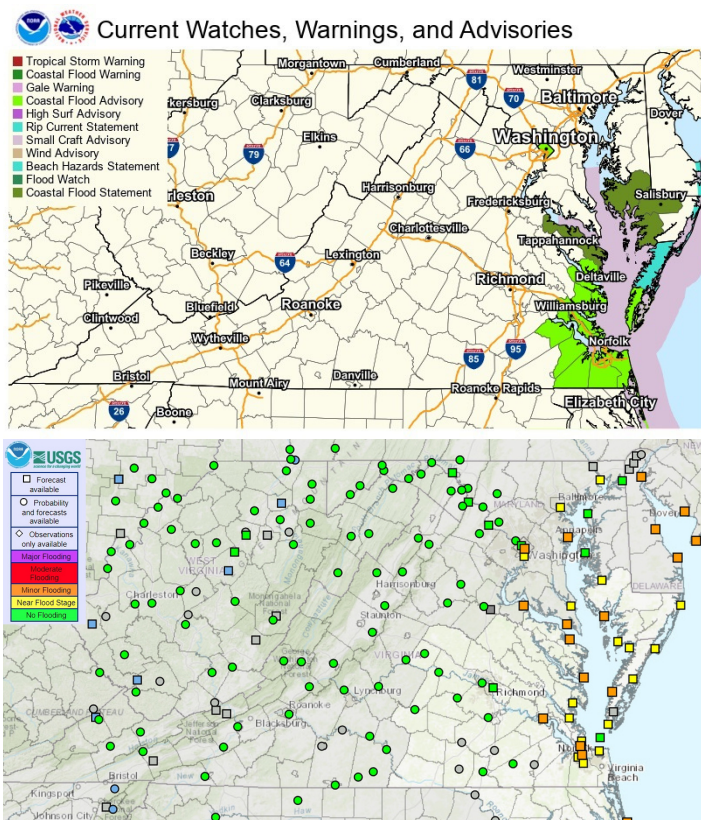
Weighted and Nowcast Estimates in United States for 2-Week Periods in 4/30/2023 – 8/19/2023



Spotlight

- **Idalia downgraded to post-tropical cyclone.** After hitting Florida as a Category 3 hurricane, Idalia was downgraded as it passed over land. The storm remnant is now off the coast of North Carolina and expected to continue out to sea. Models do not anticipate a landfall in Virginia.
- **Flooding possible along Virginia coasts.** Coastal flood advisories have been issued for much of the Hampton Roads area. The National Weather Service expects Idalia to cause minor coastal flooding as it passes to the south. Parts of the Eastern Shore and the Williamsburg region are also under flood advisories. The Tappahannock region is under a coastal flood warning.
- **Flooding also expected along coastal rivers.** Aside from the coastal surge, Virginians should note that rivers in the area, including the Elizabeth, James, and Lynnhaven rivers, are expected to see minor flooding. Near flood conditions are expected at all other coastal locales.
- **Idalia to create dangerous conditions offshore.** The storm could cause hazardous marine conditions in Cape Henry, Cape Charles, and the Chesapeake Bay. Rip currents are also expected along beaches, especially those of the Eastern Shore, while hazardous waves and dangerous gale-force winds are expected in the bay.
- **Current storms to steer clear of Virginia.** Aside from Idalia, the NWS is tracking four other storms: tropical storm Jose, hurricane Franklin, and two tropical depressions. In the near term, all are expected to remain offshore and have no impact on Virginia.

Remnants of Idalia



The NWS has issued coastal flood warnings and watches for much of Southeast Virginia (top). Parts of the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways are also under Gale Warnings (top). Minor to minor flooding is also expected for coastal rivers including those in the Hampton Roads areas (bottom). Top Image source: [NSW Wakefield, VA](#) | Bottom image source: [water.weather.gov](#)

Other News

- **VDH announces statewide outbreak of Meningococcal Disease.** Health officials have identified 27 cases of meningococcal disease since June 2022. All cases were caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* (type Y). The MenACWY vaccine does protect against this strain of bacteria.
- **Malaria in Maryland unrelated to Texas or Florida cases.** The CDC has issued a health alert network update regarding the locally acquired malaria case in Maryland. The case was caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, unlike the local cases in Texas and Florida caused by *P. vivax*. Of the five common parasite species that cause malaria, *P. falciparum* is considered the most deadly and fast acting.
- **Polio emergency continues across Africa.** As new cases emerge in Chad, D.R. Congo, and Kenya, the WHO has elected to continue the public health emergency.
- **Spike in hospitalizations of children consuming hemp-products.** Data suggests that 2023 could see the highest rate of hospital admissions for children who consumed hemp-derived products since data collection began in 2020. Toxicologists warn that toddlers often confuse these products for candy.
- **Another MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia.** A relative of the virus which causes COVID-19, MERS-CoV is far less transmissible, but far more virulent. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia now reports three such cases spread across the nation.
- **San Francisco warns of new mpox uptick.** The San Francisco Department of Public Health issued an advisory after detecting seven new cases in the last few weeks. The city had been an epicenter for the mpox outbreak of 2022 with over 850 cases in the metro area.