

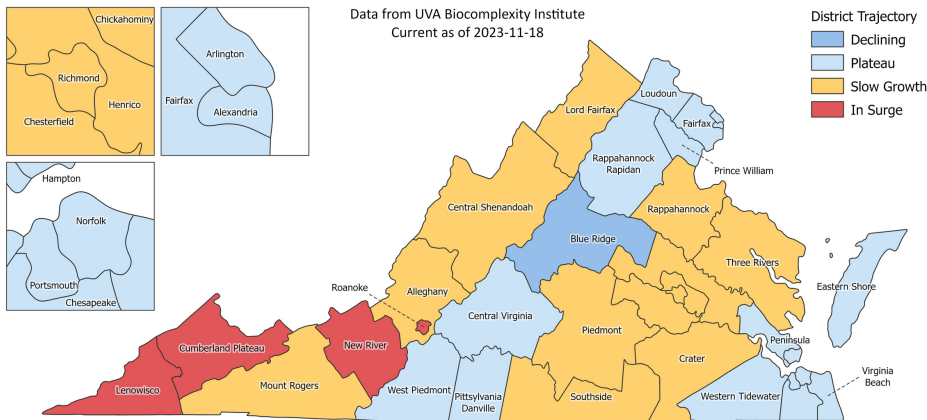
December 1, 2023

## Key Takeaways

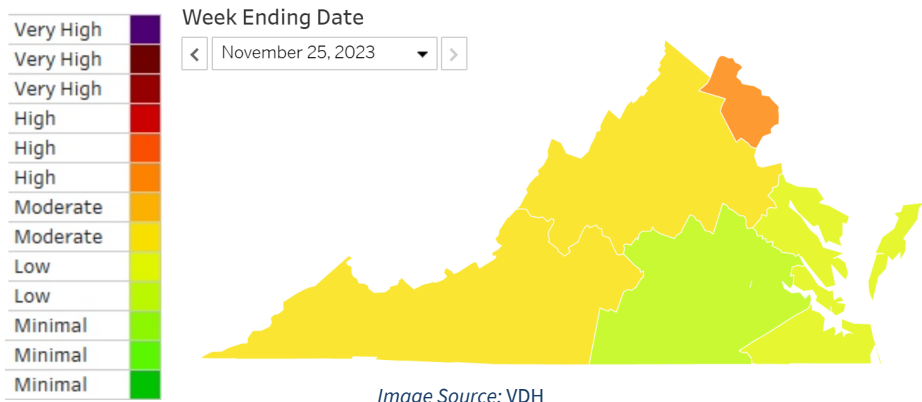
- COVID-19 metrics now suggest growth. COVID-19 hospitalizations remain steady. Hospitalizations often lag by a few weeks behind cases. Data suggest Southwest Virginia is being disproportionately affected.
- Flu activity is now moderate in Virginia. Northern Virginia is the most heavily affected of all regions.
- RSV rates continue to climb across the country, straining some hospitals. RSV in Virginia is tracking a month behind other states in the Southeast, but growing.
- Virginia’s fall wildfire season ended Thursday, along with the Atlantic hurricane season.
- Election offices in five states received envelopes with white powder, highlighting threats to election officials ahead of the 2024 primary and election season.

## Key Figures

**COVID-19 Hospitalization Rate Trajectories of Virginia Health Districts**



**Virginia Influenza Intensity Level**



## COVID-19

Low

Characterization of COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital occupancy in Virginia as of Nov 25.

## Influenza

Moderate

Statewide influenza activity levels in Virginia, as of Nov 25.

1 of 5

Virginia regions with a High influenza intensity level, as of Nov 25. The rest are at Moderate or Low levels.

## Power Grid

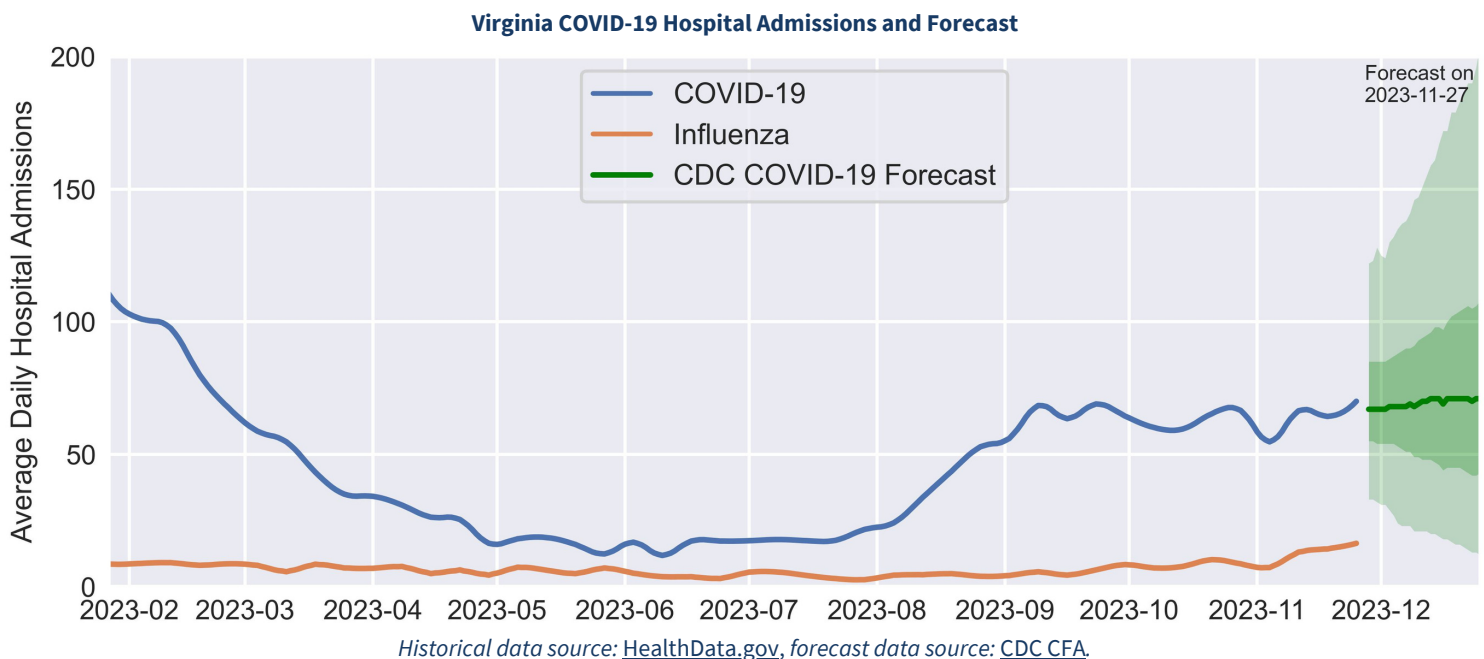
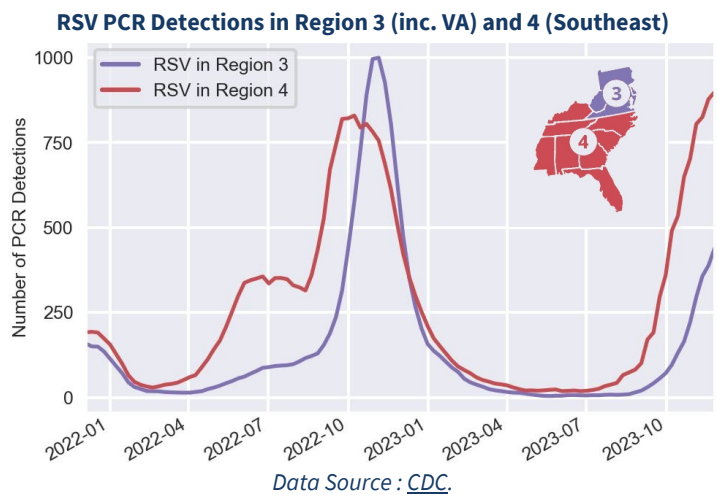
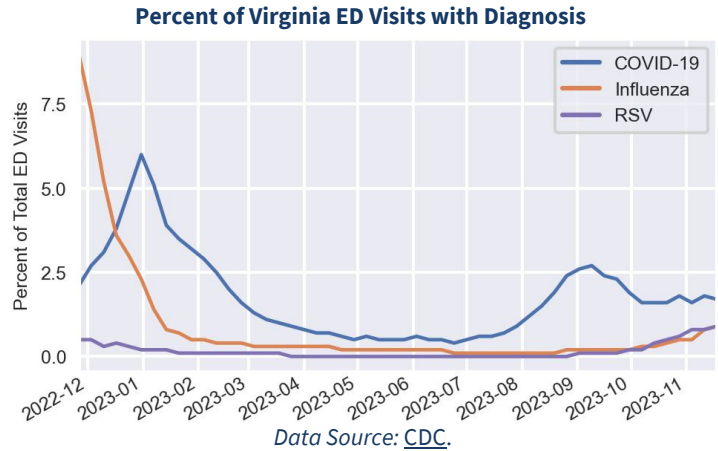
500,000+

The number of Duke Energy customers in the Carolina’s affected by rolling blackouts during Winter Storm Elliot.

**Spotlight:**  
 Winter Power  
 Grid Risks

## Respiratory Illness

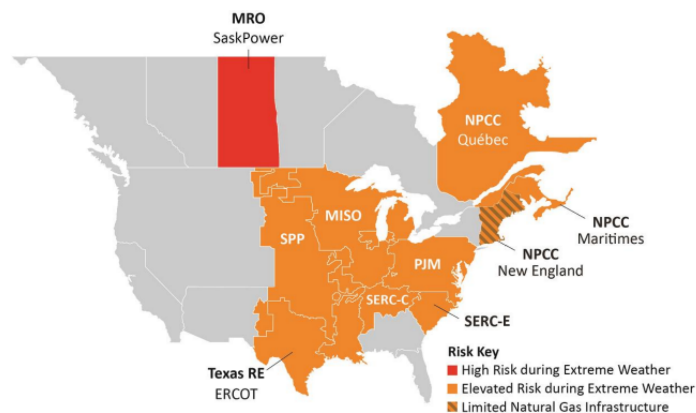
- **Indicators suggest possible growth of COVID-19.** COVID-19 diagnoses at the ED are up more than 25%. Twelve of the sampled wastewater sites in Virginia are reporting high viral loads.
- **COVID-19 hospitalizations are down slightly**, but lag weeks behind diagnoses. CDC forecasts suggest that hospitalizations will continue a slow decline.
- **BA.2.86 is now a COVID-19 variant of interest.** The CDC estimates that it accounts for about 10% of new cases in HHS Region 3 (including Virginia).
- **RSV continues to grow in Southeastern states and Virginia.** PCR detections of RSV continue to increase rapidly in HHS Region 4 (Southeast). Virginia is a month behind, but so far exhibits a similar trajectory.
- **Influenza activity in Virginia is now moderate.** The rate of flu diagnoses at EDs continues to grow, and hospitalizations have doubled since early November.
- **Surge of pediatric respiratory illness threatens hospitals nationally.** Cases of RSV is straining some hospitals in Texas and Georgia. Hospitals in Virginia also report difficulties managing a surge of cases.
- **Viral impacts vary in Virginia by geography.** Data show that Northern Virginia has higher flu rates than the rest of the Commonwealth, while COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting Southwest Virginia.



## Spotlight

- **Report highlights vulnerabilities in the East Coast electrical and natural gas grid exposed during Winter Storm ‘Elliot’.** The Dec 2022 storm forced gas and power suppliers to take emergency actions. Officials and suppliers note that if those actions had failed, or if the cold had lasted another day or two, widespread outages of gas and/or power may have occurred across the East Coast.
- **‘Elliot’ was the fifth cold weather event to threaten US grid reliability in 11 years.** ‘Elliot’ caused the largest firm load shed in the Eastern Interconnection history, while Winter Storm ‘Uri’, affecting Texas in 2021, caused the largest in US history, leaving 4.5 million people without power.
- **NERC released its Winter Reliability Assessment earlier this month.** The report indicates that much of North America is at elevated risk of being unable to meet electricity demands during peak winter conditions. PJM, the regional grid that covers Virginia, is at risk of an emergency in an ‘Elliot’-like scenario.

## Winter Power Grid Risks



**Figure 1: Winter Reliability Risk Area Summary**

Seasonal Risk Assessment Summary	
<b>High</b>	Potential for insufficient operating reserves in normal peak conditions
<b>Elevated</b>	Potential for insufficient operating reserves in above-normal conditions
<b>Low</b>	Sufficient operating reserves expected

*Electricity supply shortages are possible across North America as heating demands increase during extreme cold weather. Image Source: [NERC](#)*

## Other News

- **Election offices in five states received envelopes with white powder** in early November, including some that tested positive for fentanyl. In a survey conducted in April, 30% of local election officials reported they have personally been abused, harassed, or threatened due to their work.
- **Global measles deaths increased 43% in 2022** according to a CDC report. Measles cases increased 18%, and large or disruptive outbreaks were reported in 37 countries. Immunization setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with sustained suboptimal coverage in low-income countries, are blamed for the jump.
- **A train derailment and chemical spill forced a town to evacuate in Kentucky.** Two of the 16 derailed cars carried molten sulfur, which caught fire. Residents of Livingston were displaced for just over a day.
- **Massachusetts set up temporary shelters in state offices.** The state’s shelter system has been strained by record demand attributed to rising housing costs and migrants.
- **Virginia’s fall wildfire season ended November 30.** Although several fires are still being managed, recent rains diminished much of the threat. Light rain expected this week will move Virginia into the lowest Wildfire Potential Index categories over the weekend.
- **The WHO released an update on the mpox outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.** The outbreak is unusual due to documented spread through sexual networks, including among MSM, sex workers, including links to transmissions in Belgium. Unlike the 2022 and ongoing global outbreak, this outbreak involves Clade I, which is endemic to DRC and considered more severe.
- **The UK reported a human Swine Flu case, while Cambodia reported two cases of human Avian flu.** The UK case is a new strain. The Cambodia cases are linked to a strain identified in Southeast Asia in 2013.
- **Avian flu has resurfaced in the US this fall,** affecting 94 commercial and backyard flocks in 26 states within the last 30 days including a commercial flock in Caroline County Maryland on the Delmarva Peninsula.