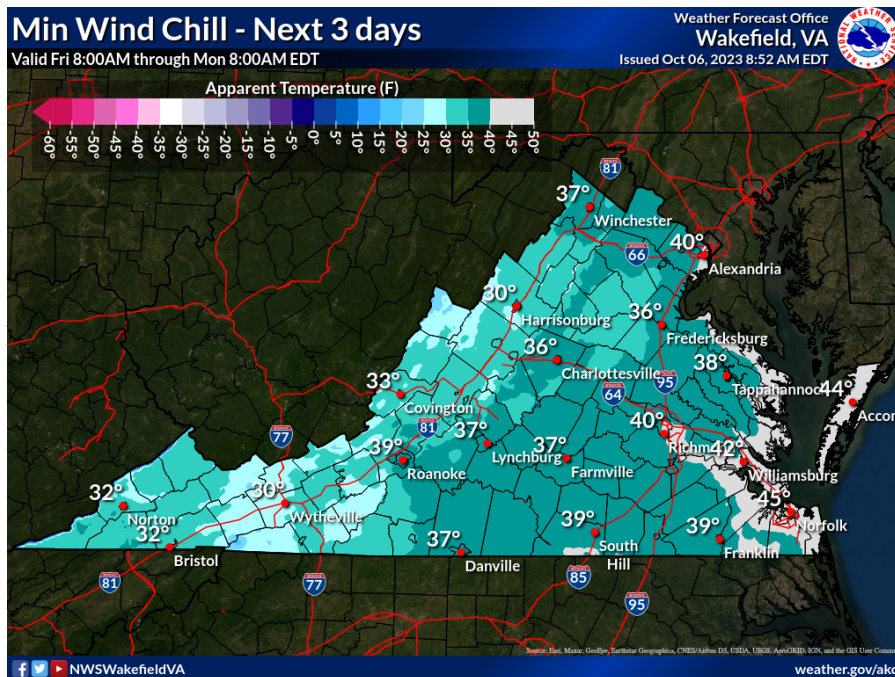


October 6, 2023

Key Takeaways

- COVID-19 surveillance indicators show a mix of plateau and decline. Diagnoses by Emergency Departments (ED) and COVID-like illness ED visits are both at their lowest rates in four weeks. Most wastewater facilities show a plateau in viral loads, with none showing growth.
- COVID-19 hospitalization rates have been in plateau for roughly four weeks. Minor fluctuations are reported weekly. Models suggest hospitalization rates will remain static through October. Occupancy is up slightly.
- Flu and RSV rates are still low in the Commonwealth. But RSV seems to be growing in the Southeastern United States. Last year RSV began to surge in Virginia about a month after it did in the Southeastern states.
- New data quantifies the burden of RSV on the very young and very old. Infants under six months and adults over 75 years of age are at the highest risk. RSV immunizations are available for both groups but have presented challenges for prescribers.
- There is a small craft advisory in effect for coastal regions. No other weather hazards are expected in the immediate future.
- Last September was the hottest in recorded history. High temperatures may be driving an increase in mosquito- and tick-borne diseases.

Key Figures



Source: [National Weather Service](#)

COVID-19

2.3%

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

Low

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

44.4%

Share of Virginians age 65+ with an up-to-date COVID-19 vaccination.

Tropical Weather

One

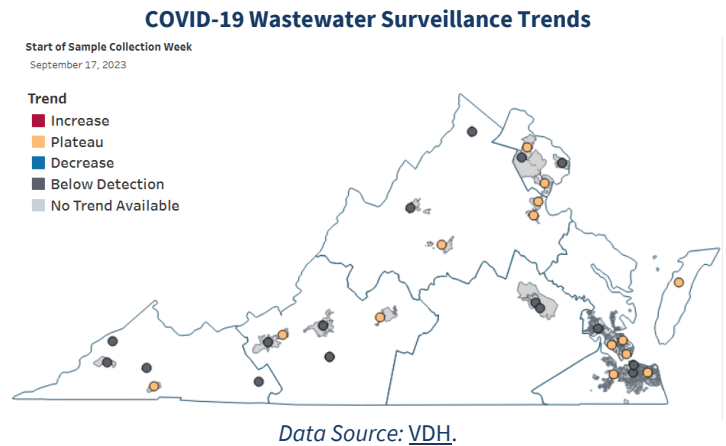
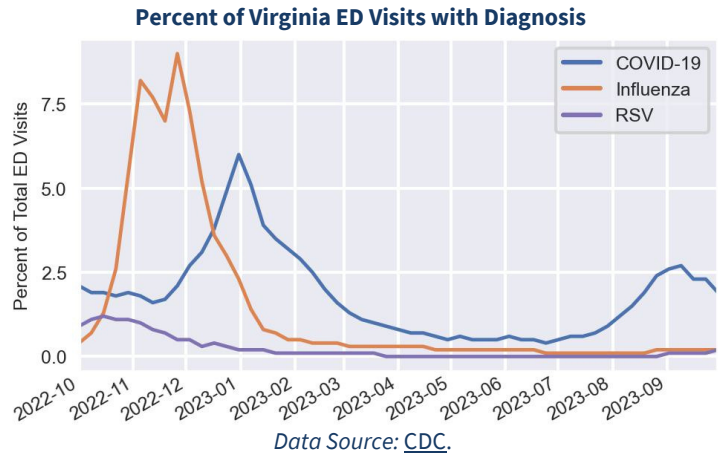
Number of active storms being tracked in the Atlantic by the National hurricane Center.

Spotlight:
RSV

Forecasts are italicized

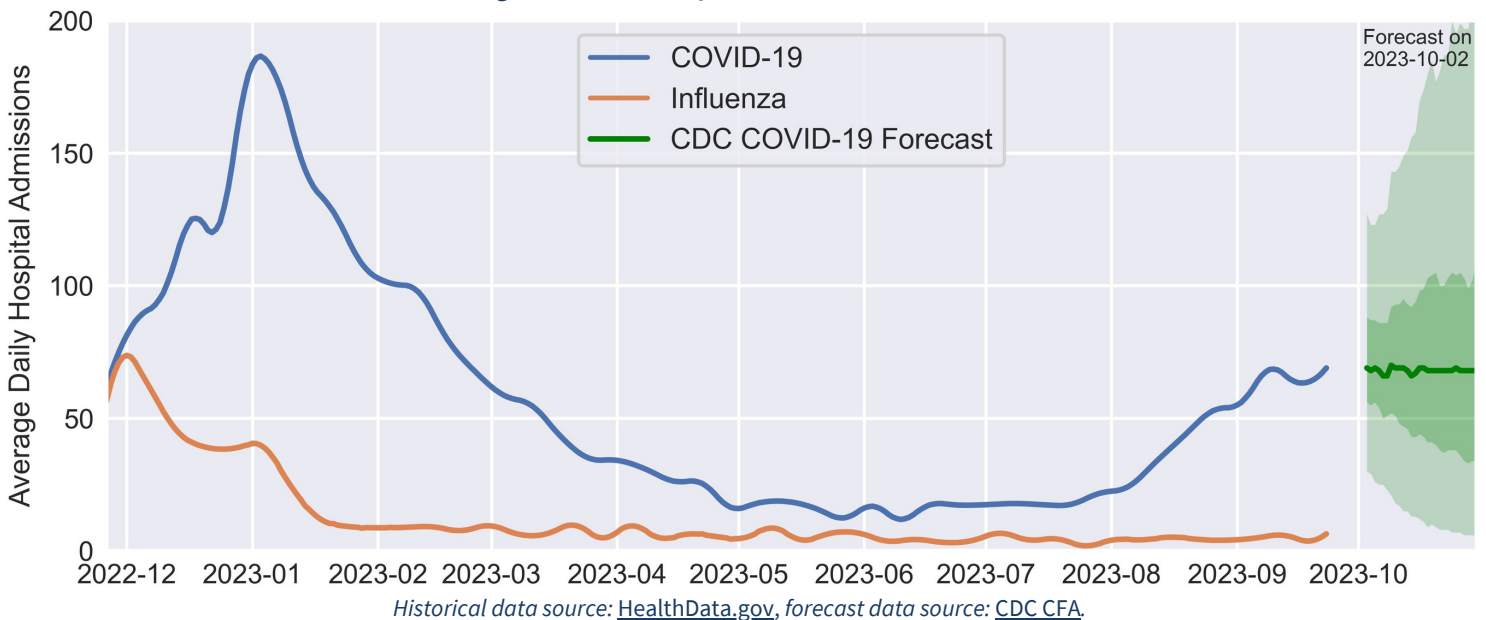
Respiratory Illness

- **COVID-19 indicators suggest a slow decline.** The weekly percentage of emergency department (ED) visits for diagnosed COVID-19 has fallen for four weeks in a row. It is now 1.73%, down from 2.47% in early September. The number of **COVID-Like Illness** visits to EDs and urgent care centers has declined similarly, from 9.9% to 8.5% in the same time.
- **Wastewater data shows COVID-19 plateau.** As of September 23*, most facilities reporting **viral load data** to the VDH are showing rates in plateau or rates below detection thresholds (right). Six of the 45 facilities are still reporting viral loads near their 2023 peaks, but the rest are below their yearly averages. No facility reported growth last week.
- **COVID-19 hospital admissions are in plateau.** The last four weeks have seen weekly admissions rates oscillate between 5.0 and 5.5 per 100,000. Though rates were down slightly this week, models expect a continued plateau into mid-October (below). Bed occupancy is up slightly, as expected given the lag between admission and recovery / discharge.
- **Flu and RSV rates remain low in Virginia.** Note that RSV is showing signs of growth in the Southeast U.S. For more information, see page 3.



* Wastewater data are organized by the start date of the collection week. As such, data from the week starting on September 17, includes data collected through September 23.

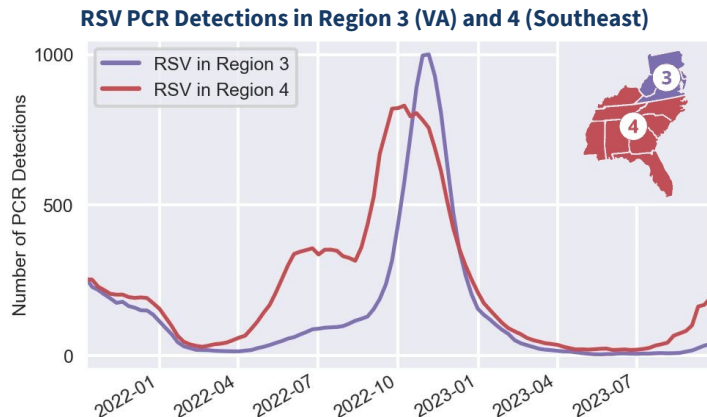
Virginia COVID-19 Hospital Admissions and Forecast



Spotlight

- **RSV continues to grow in Southeastern states.** Data from HHS Region 4 (Southeastern states) has shown consistent growth of RSV since early September. HHS Region 3 (including Virginia) has not yet reported any substantial growth. However, in 2022, the RSV surge of Region 4 preceded that of Region 3 by a little over a month. If that trend is repeated this year, RSV rates may begin growing in Virginia in the coming weeks.
- **Report shows childhood RSV burden is highest among infants.** The [report from JAMA](#) analyzed the 11,000 pediatric hospitalizations in Canada between 2017 and 2022. Nearly half of these were among infants under the age of six months. Among those hospitalized, [about a quarter](#) required intensive care.
- **Administrative confusion hampers administration of new RSV immunizations for infants.** In July, the FDA approved Beyfortus, a monoclonal antibody for infants that protects against RSV. Trials suggest it cuts the risk of hospitalization by about 80%. Despite this, difficulties in ordering the immunizations, and confusion regarding health insurance coverage, have made it [difficult for providers to prescribe the drug](#).
- **CDC updates data regarding RSV among the elderly.** New [data from RSV-Net shows](#) that among adults, those over 75 years of age were most likely to be hospitalized. Other significant risk factors include “obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and congestive heart failure” as well as residence in a long-term care facility. The report suggests that clinicians review these risk factors when considering RSV vaccination for elderly patients.

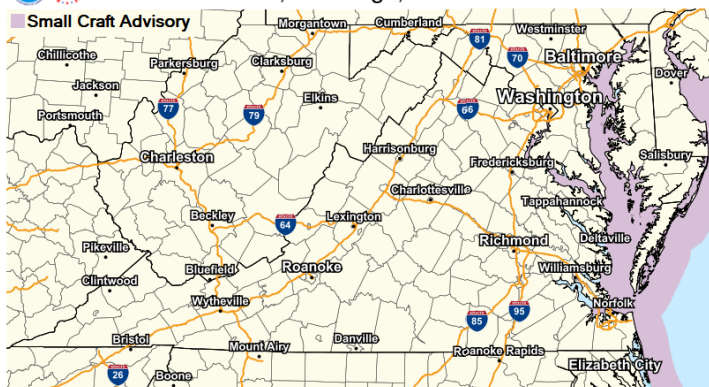
Respiratory Syncytial Virus



Though RSV rates remain low in Virginia (purple), they are climbing in the Southeastern United States (red). In 2022 the RSV surge in the Southeastern states started more than a month before a similar surge struck the Commonwealth. Data Source : CDC.

Other News

Current Watches, Warnings, and Advisories



- **Small craft advisory in effect.** Due to high seas and wind gusts up to 30 knots, the NWS has declared a [small craft advisory](#) until Sunday evening. This affects the Chesapeake Bay and the entire Eastern Shore.
- **Post-Tropical Cyclone Phillipe to steer clear of Virginia.** Phillipe is the only active system currently being tracked in the Atlantic. Models suggest it poses no immediate threat to the Commonwealth.

- **Hottest September ever worries climatologists.** Globally, [last September was 0.5° C hotter](#) than any other September in recorded history. Data suggests 2023 may be the first year to exceed a 1.5° C average above preindustrial norms.
- **Dengue death toll passes 1,000 in Bangladesh.** Warm weather and heavy rainfall are being blamed for a surge of mosquitos that have caused the [worst outbreak of Dengue](#) in the nation’s history.
- **Uptick in rare arboviruses detected nationally.** Experts are blaming unusually high temperatures for an [increase in incidence](#) of rare mosquito and tick-borne viruses such as EEE and Powassan virus.
- **Nipah virus outbreak in India abating.** After extensive PCR testing and contact tracing, the WHO reports [no new Nipah cases](#) since September 15.
- **Kaiser Permanente strike to end for now.** The strike that includes [180 Virginians](#), is now [on its final day](#).