

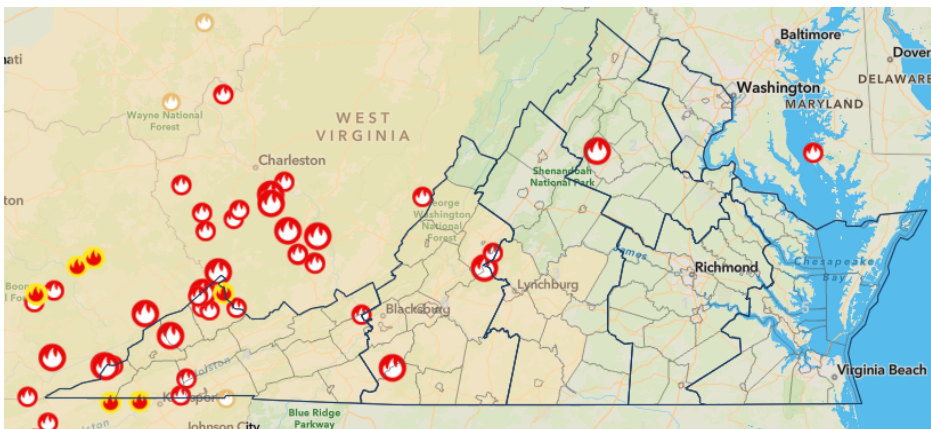
November 17, 2023

Key Takeaways

- COVID-19 metrics suggest an continuing plateau. Models suggest hospitalization rates will remain unchanged until December.
- RSV growth may be easing slightly in the Southeastern states, but is still rising in Virginia. In 2022, Virginia’s RSV peak arrived about a month after the Southeast.
- Flu activity remains low in most of Virginia. Activity is moderate in Northern Virginia.
- Wildfires continue to impact Virginia, causing hazardous air quality and closing a portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Dry conditions are also blamed for a water shortage emergency in the town of Appalachia.
- Due to the holiday, we will not publish a Situation Update next week.

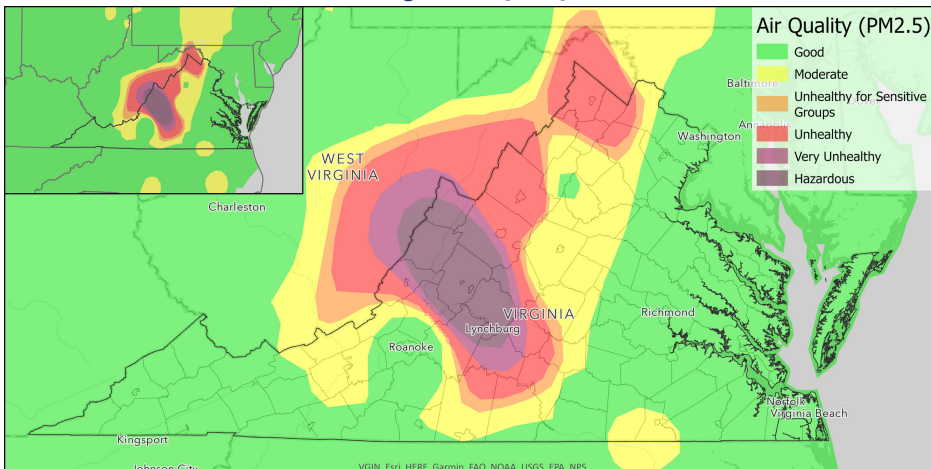
Key Figures

Virginia Wildfire Map



Source: [VDEM](#)

Virginia Air Quality



Data Source: [AirNow.gov](#)
 (current as of 2023-11-17 at 2:00 PM)

COVID-19

Low

Characterization of COVID-19 hospital admissions and hospital occupancy in Virginia as of Nov 11.

Influenza

Low

Statewide influenza activity levels in Virginia, as of Nov 11.

1 of 5

Virginia regions with Moderate influenza activity levels, as of Nov 11.

Wildfires

12,462

The number of acres burned in Virginia’s fall wildfire season

6

The number of current fires covering 500 or more acres.

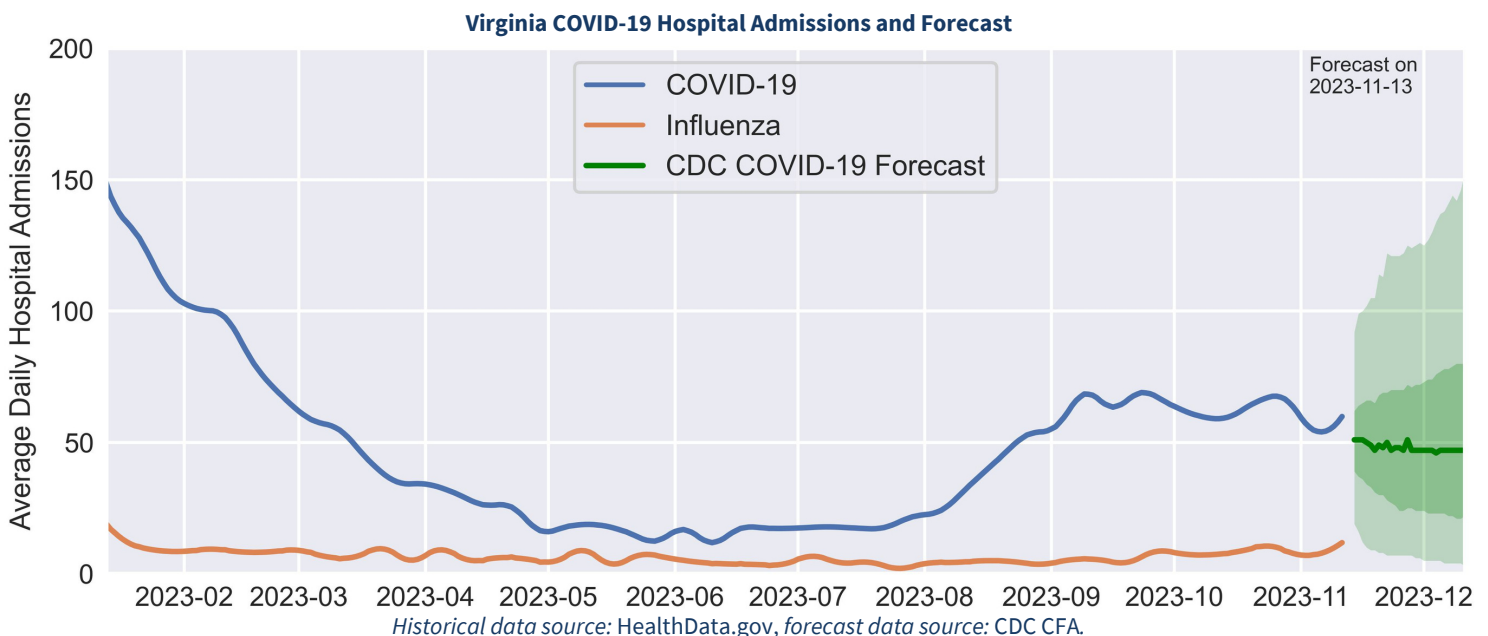
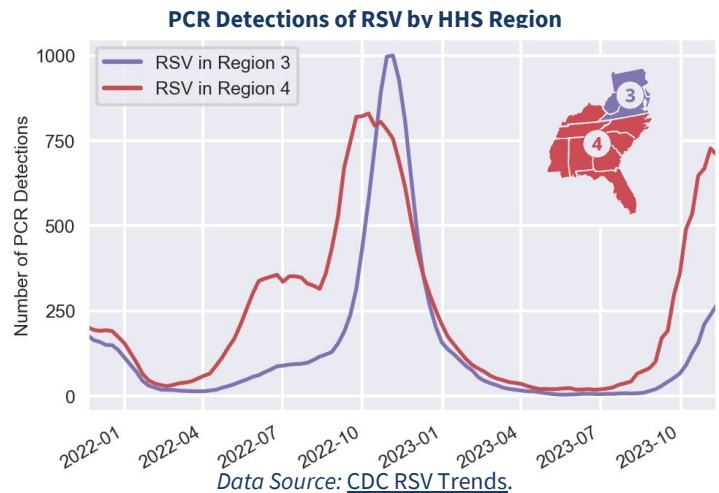
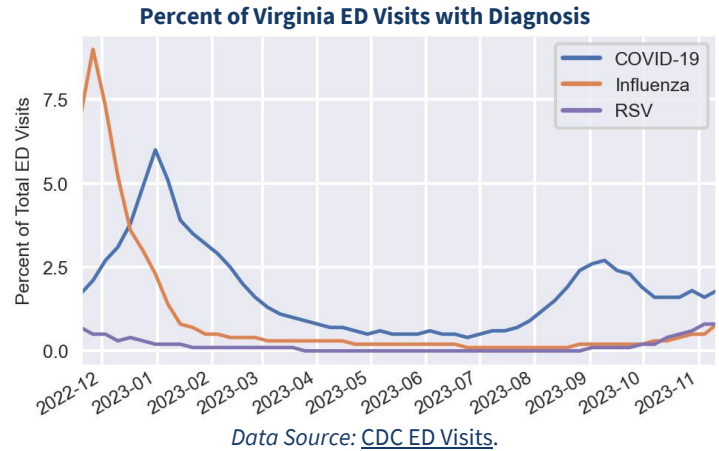
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The number of active fires (neither contained or controlled) in Virginia.

Spotlight:
Pandemic Preparedness

Respiratory Illness

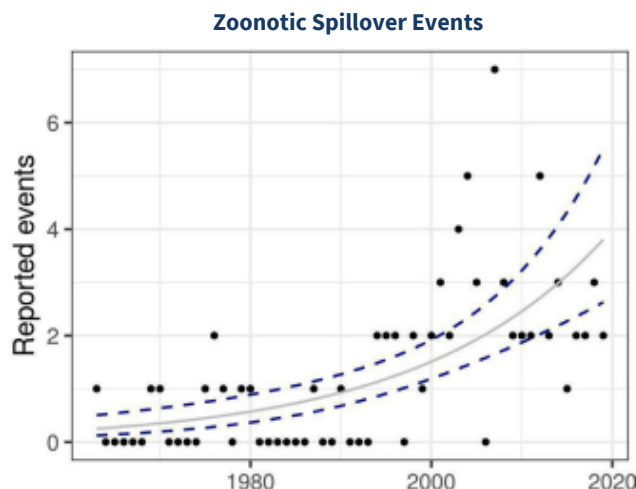
- COVID-19 in an undulating plateau.** Despite small fluctuations, overall rates have been steady since late September. COVID-like illness visits to the emergency department (ED) rose slightly this week, as did COVID-19 diagnoses at the ED. But in both cases, rates are similar to those from a month ago. Hospitalizations are back up slightly this week, after a small dip last week. CDC forecasts suggest that hospitalizations will remain static through December.
- RSV growth easing in Southeast, rising in Virginia.** The surge of RSV in HHS Region 4 (the Southeast U.S.) may be easing slightly. RSV in HHS Region 3, including Virginia, lags a month behind, and is still growing.
- Vaccine scarcity continues as RSV causes illness.** RSV is the leading cause of infant hospitalizations in the United States. Despite this, shortages are making it difficult to find maternal and infant RSV vaccines.
- Flu activity is “low” in Virginia, surging elsewhere.** Puerto Rico declared a flu epidemic on Thursday as it suffered more than 900 hospitalizations.
- Vaccine hesitancy continues.** In a new study the CDC found sub-optimal flu and COVID-19 vaccination coverage rates among health care personnel and nursing home staff. Vaccine exemption rates for kindergarten students has also grown significantly.



Spotlight

- **The US General Accountability Office reviewed the state of public health preparedness.** The GAO identified the temporary nature of public health funding, varying levels of jurisdictional funding, and building a public health workforce as challenges.
- **The WHO’s Global Preparedness Monitoring Board released its annual report,** titled “A Fragile State of Preparedness.” Of 30 indicators tracked, 20 were rated as insufficient, while 5 were poor. The rest were good, with none being excellent. Poor ratings centered on misinformation, global financing, and a global strategic plan.
- **The Council on Foreign Relations released a special report on global health security,** listing climate change, zoonotic disease spillover, food insecurity, antimicrobial resistance, and pathogens in an era of bioscience revolution as priorities.

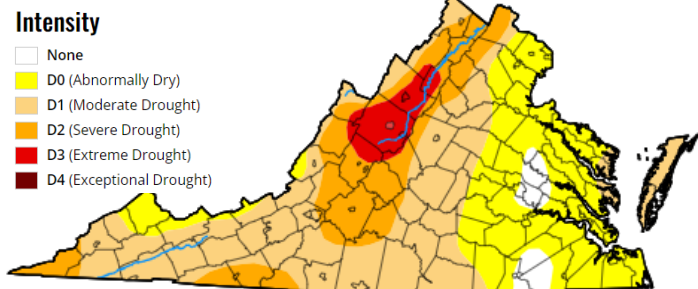
Pandemic Preparedness



A study published in BMJ Global Health found that, excluding COVID-19, zoonotic spillover events have increased 5% annually from 1963 to 2019, while related deaths have increased 8.7%, suggesting the risks from these events are growing exponentially. The study cited three other studies with similar findings. Image Source: [BMJ Global](#)

Other News

Virginia Drought Map



Much of Virginia continues to experience drought conditions, with some sections of Northwest Virginia experiencing extreme drought. Image Source: [US Drought Monitor](#)

- **Water shortage emergency in Town of Appalachia.** A contingency plan to control water usage restricting residents to 4,000 gallons of water per month took effect on November 14.
- **Through the end of October, almost 2,000 of Virginia’s ED visits were associated with firearm injuries in 2023.** In Richmond, the number of youth killed by guns has dramatically increased to above the national average, prompting interventions from the school district.
- **FDA approves vaccine for Chickungunya.** Although the virus infection was previously most common in tropical areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and some parts of the Americas, it has spread to other areas increasing the prevalence of illness globally.
- **Traffic fatalities increase across most U.S. states.** Although individuals are driving less than in previous years, traffic-related deaths have increased since 2019. Most accidents have been associated with speeding, reckless driving or driving under the influence.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway partially closed as a result of wildfires in Bedford County.** As of November 16, the fire has spread across 2,500 acres prompting a closure of 20 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The fires are causing air quality issues stretching to Northwest Va.
- **DC mayor declares opioid epidemic a public emergency.** Almost 300 overdoses were reported as of July 31 and the city is estimated to see over 500 opioid-related deaths by the end of the year.