

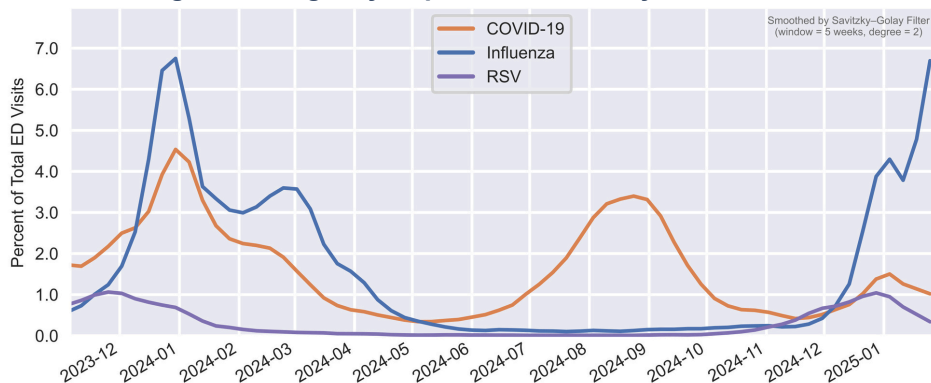
January 31, 2025

Key Takeaways

- Sixty-seven people were killed in an air accident near Reagan National Airport. Recovery operations are ongoing.
- The CDC will cease engaging with the WHO immediately.
- California has reported the nation’s first case of highly pathogenic H5N9 in a duck. H5N1 was found on the same farm, leading to concerns about viral genetic reassortment.
- DR Congo and Uganda are facing unrelated Ebola virus outbreaks. Tanzania is continuing to combat an outbreak of Marburg virus.
- Respiratory disease activity in Virginia is high and trending upward. Flu activity is at a 12-month high and growing. Children are being disproportionately affected.
- Texas and Georgia have reported new measles cases.

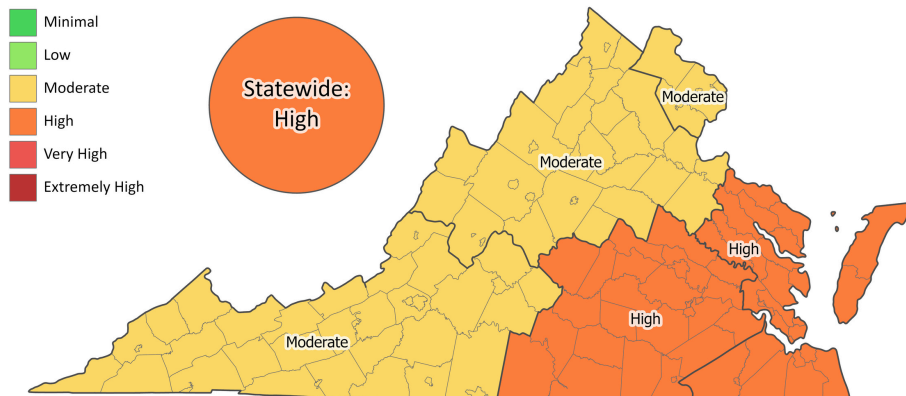
Key Figures

Virginia Emergency Department Visits by Viral Illness



Flu activity in Virginia is continuing to increase. ED visits for flu now rival those of the December 2023 flu peak. Data source: [VDH](#).

Respiratory Illness Activity Levels – Week ending Jan 25, 2025



Statewide respiratory illness activity is now ‘High’ as is activity in the Central and Eastern health planning regions. The other health planning regions are still reporting ‘moderate’ activity. Data source: [VDH](#).

Mpox

33

The number of clade I mpox cases reported outside of Africa as of Jan 31.

Seasonal Illness

2

Number of Virginia’s five regions at ‘High’ or higher respiratory illness activity levels for the week ending Jan 25.

H5N1 A(H5N1)

67

Human H5N1 A(H5N1) cases in the United States as of Jan 17.

Fire Season

February 15

The start of the spring wildfire season in Virginia. A 4:00 PM burning law will be in effect until April 30.

Spotlight:
 Water
 Infrastructure

Ongoing Monitored Situations

Avian Influenza

- **California reports case of H5N9 flu.** The virus was found in a duck on a poultry farm in Merced County. H5N9 viruses are rare and historically not pathogenic. This case marks the first time a highly pathogenic H5N9 flu was detected in American livestock. The USDA noted that H5N1 was also found on the same farm, leading to concerns over the potential for genetic reassortment.
- **DWR responds to reports of sick birds on the Eastern Shore.** Preliminary testing suggests HPAI A(H5N1) may be responsible. The agency asks that the public report sick or dead birds.

Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers

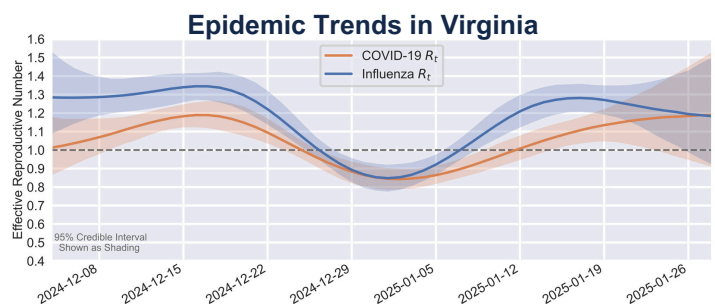
- **Ebola outbreak suspected in DR Congo.** The nation reports 12 suspected cases in the Equateur province, which also suffered Ebola outbreaks in 2018 and 2022. Local sources suggest eight related deaths so far and note that the outbreak is primarily affecting indigenous people in a region 250 km from the provincial capital of Mbdanka.
- **Uganda reports outbreak of Ebola.** The Ministry of Health (MoH) has confirmed the Ebola-related death of a nurse in the nation's capital Kampala. Contact tracing has begun. Testing implicates Sudan ebolavirus, which is a distinct species from the Zaire ebolavirus affecting DR Congo. There are no approved vaccines for Sudan ebolavirus.
- **Tanzania receives aid to combat Marburg.** The WHO, MSF, and UNICEF have mobilized to assist with the outbreak. The MoH reports two confirmed cases, 42 suspected cases, one confirmed death, eight probable deaths, and 281 under monitoring.

Mpox

- **Sporadic clade 1b cases continue globally.** China and the U.S. reported one new case each, while Thailand and the UK each reported a pair of new clade 1b cases. All were travel related.
- **Clade 1b outbreak worsens in Uganda.** The nation reported a record 470 new cases last week. The outbreak remains geographically limited to the Congo Basin. Burundi and Rwanda are also affected, but both reported a decrease in weekly incidence. Data from DR Congo remains sparse.

Seasonal Illness

- **Respiratory illness activity is high and trending upward.** The Eastern and Central regions of the Commonwealth are also reporting 'high' activity. National activity is likewise considered 'high'.
- **Flu activity in Virginia continues upward trend.** The emergency department (ED) diagnosis rate for flu is now around 7.0%, a rate not seen since December of 2023. Models estimate an effective reproduction number (R_t) of 1.18 for flu in Virginia, which suggests continued growth in the near future. Flu activity is particularly elevated among children of all age groups.
- **COVID-19 activity remains stable in Virginia.** ED diagnosis rates for COVID-19 are lower than they were in early January. Wastewater data still find 'medium' concentration levels in the American south with no discernable trend. Models estimate an $R_t = 1.19$ suggesting short-term growth.



Models expect further growth of both COVID-19 and flu activity in the coming weeks. Data source: CDC.

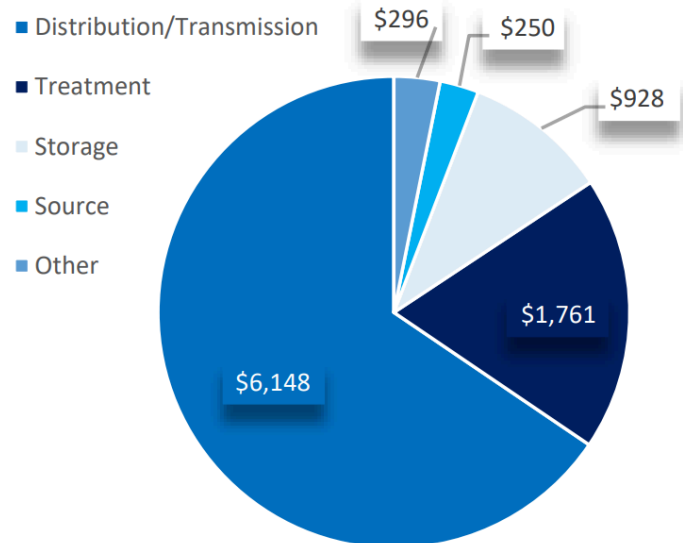
- **RSV activity is stable in Virginia.** ED diagnoses have leveled off but are down 60% since the start of January. Though wastewater data find 'high' RSV concentrations in the American South, they also suggest a downward trend. Children aged 0-4 continue to represent the majority of ED visits.
- **Norovirus activity remains highly elevated.** Wastewater data find high viral concentrations of norovirus in the American South. Though overall concentrations in HHS Region 3 (which includes Virginia) are lower than they were at the start of the year, concentrations are still highly elevated. ED and urgent care (UC) visits for gastrointestinal illness in Virginia are now at an 11-month high of 12.06%. Rates are also elevated in all five health planning regions of the Commonwealth.

Spotlight

- Virginia's Office of Drinking Water notes that the January water crisis in Richmond 'was completely avoidable'. A 'Notice of Alleged Violations' listed several corrective actions to address ongoing deficiencies. Audits performed in 2022 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and internally in 2024 also cited deficiencies.
- Some Richmond area residents used natural springs during the crisis. These springs are neither treated nor tested. Drinking from them poses several health risks including the possibility of exposure to unknown contaminants and infection by waterborne diseases.
- Virginia's drinking water infrastructure received a 'C+' grade in the American Society of Civil Engineers 2021 Infrastructure Report Card. This compares to a 'C-' in for this category nationally. The report listed funding and lead pipe reductions as positives, while aging infrastructure lowered the score.

Water Infrastructure

Virginia Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs
(in millions; January 2021 dollars)



Virginia has over \$9 billion in drinking water infrastructure needs according to a 2023 EPA assessment. Most of this is for distribution and transmission, but treatment needs approach \$1.7 billion alone. Image source: [EPA](#).

Other News

- A regional jet carrying 64 passengers collided with a US Army helicopter carrying three service members over the Potomac River on Wednesday evening. No survivors have been found, and recovery efforts are ongoing. The air crash was the deadliest in the United States in more than 20 years.
- The CDC will stop engaging with the World Health Organization immediately according to an internal memo. The White House issued an executive order to withdraw from the WHO, but that process typically takes a year and may require Congressional approval.
- A natural gas leak in Virginia Beach caused road closures on Wednesday morning. The leak has been contained, with no injuries or natural gas disruptions reported. Power for over 600 residents near the leak was temporarily shut off but is now restored.
- The Georgia Department of Public Health confirmed a case of measles this week in an unvaccinated metro Atlanta resident, who had contracted the virus while traveling domestically. Four cases among unvaccinated individuals have also been reported in Texas, including two children who were hospitalized.
- The Wades Gap fire in Franklin County spread over 400-acres and prompted mandatory evacuations. The fire broke out on Wednesday afternoon and has since been mostly contained. Evacuation orders have since been lifted. Two firefighters were injured, and one local home was destroyed by the fire.
- A water main break flooded a Pennsylvania nursing home, forcing the evacuation of 142 residents. Emergency crews relocated residents to nearby facilities and the nursing home is closed indefinitely.
- A tuberculosis outbreak in the Kansas City area has grown to 67 active cases and 79 inactive infections as of January 24. The majority of cases are concentrated in a single county. Two deaths, which both occurred in 2024, have been attributed to this outbreak. Kansas officials are confident that the epidemic is trending downward.