



# ALAMEDA COUNTY COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ★ CALIFORNIA

Office of Emergency Services  
4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Alameda County Updates COVID-19 Death Calculation to Align with State Definitions** *This update will show fewer residents died as a direct result of COVID-19.*

**ALAMEDA COUNTY, CA** –Today, June 4, Alameda County’s COVID-19 dashboard will be updated to reflect the total number of COVID-19 deaths using the State’s death reporting definition. Alameda County previously included any person who died while infected with the virus in the total COVID-19 deaths for the County. Aligning with the State’s definition will require Alameda County to report as COVID-19 deaths only those people who died as a direct result of COVID-19, with COVID-19 as a contributing cause of death, or in whom death caused by COVID-19 could not be ruled out. Based on data available as of May 23, 2021, this update will decrease the overall number of deaths from 1,634 to 1,223.

Alameda County’s system of reporting COVID-19 deaths on our dashboard and to the State was implemented early in the pandemic, prior to the establishment of State guidelines for reporting deaths due to COVID-19 in their disease reporting and surveillance system, CalREDIE. The State guidelines are consistent with national death reporting practices.

When the State implemented these guidelines, Alameda County became aware of the conflicting definitions and made a plan to conduct the update when cases and deaths stabilized. It is important to note that earlier adoption of the State reporting definition would not have changed the course of the pandemic, nor would it have affected the key measures, including case rate, test positivity and hospitalizations, that drove public health responses to the pandemic.

This update does not disproportionately impact reported deaths for any specific race or ethnic group or zip code.

Close observers of Alameda County’s dashboard may have noticed a substantial increase in the COVID-19 death totals prior to this update, during the week of May 17. This increase was due to a separate quality assurance process intended to correct previously incomplete data; adjustments were made based on additional information that became available regarding date of death and county of residence. These corrections are unrelated to the current alignment with the State’s definition of death due to COVID-19, and some of the deaths will be removed from the updated totals because COVID-19 was not a contributing cause.

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Cause of death is routinely determined by medical providers or the County Coroner, not by County Public Health Department disease surveillance staff. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused nearly 600,000 deaths in the United States, the vast majority of infections do not result in death, and deaths due to other causes while infected with COVID-19 are not uncommon. It is important to accurately report deaths due to COVID-19 so that residents and health officials have a more precise understanding of the impact of the pandemic and response actions in our community.

*Example scenario to illustrate the difference between the current practice of reporting COVID-19 deaths in Alameda County and how this differs from the State’s guidelines: Using the older definition of COVID-19 deaths, a resident who had COVID-19 but died due to another cause, like a car accident, this person would be included in the total number of reported COVID-19 deaths for Alameda County. Under the updated definition of COVID-19 deaths, this person would not be included in the total because COVID-19 was not a contributing factor in the death.*

Alameda County’s COVID-19 dashboards are available at <https://covid-19.acgov.org/data>

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