

RMS End of Week Update 9/26/2025



New York State Health Commissioner Receives COVID And Seasonal Influenza Immunizations, Urges New Yorkers To Do The Same

The State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald received the 2025-2026 COVID and seasonal influenza (flu) vaccines this week. The Commissioner encouraged all eligible New Yorkers to do the same ahead of respiratory illness season.

"As we head into respiratory season and the upcoming holidays, I encourage all eligible New Yorkers, and especially those who are more vulnerable, to protect their health by receiving their COVID and seasonal influenza vaccines," State Health Commissioner said. "Thanks to Governor Hochul's recent Executive Order, you can now stop by your local pharmacy to get vaccinated without a separate prescription from your doctor. Vaccination remains one of the most effective tools we have to prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death."

Governor Hochul recently signed an [Executive Order](#) allowing pharmacists the option to administer COVID vaccines to individuals 3 years and older, facilitating access for all eligible New Yorkers who wish to be vaccinated. The Department recommends calling ahead to check on availability before arriving at the pharmacy. Additionally, Commissioner McDonald has issued [standing orders](#) that allow eligible New Yorkers to receive the COVID and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines at any pharmacy without a separate prescription from their physician.

The seasonal influenza vaccine remains available to New Yorkers over the age of 2 years at participating pharmacies without a prescription. Children 6 months and older can receive the influenza vaccine at a health care provider's office.

New York State recently released the 2025–2026 [COVID vaccine guidance](#) that recommends COVID vaccination for children (6 months to 18 years old), all adults, and individuals at higher risk, including those who are pregnant, lactating or immunocompromised.

The State guidance also aligns with consensus COVID recommendations agreed upon by the [Northeast Public Health Collaborative](#), a group of several Northeastern states and municipalities including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island and New York City. These recommendations are consistent with the 2025-2026 COVID vaccination guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Under the [Affordable Care Act](#), most private health insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid plans cover influenza, COVID and RSV vaccines without cost-sharing when received at an in-network provider or pharmacy. Those who are uninsured, or whose insurance does not cover the updated vaccine, will have access to the shots free of charge through community health centers or local health departments participating in the [New York State Department of Health Vaccines for Adults program](#). New Yorkers are encouraged to check with their provider, pharmacy, and insurer to verify coverage and availability. Influenza season usually runs October through May and typically peaks between December and February. Avoiding illness by getting the flu and COVID shots remains the most effective way to prevent infection and reduce the risk of severe illness for children and adults.

It is safe to get both the flu and COVID vaccines at the same time. Influenza, RSV and COVID are contagious, respiratory viral infections that can have similar symptoms, making it difficult to distinguish between the three illnesses. People with chronic conditions, including those that affect the lungs, heart and the immune system, young children, elderly populations, and persons who are pregnant, have a higher risk of developing serious complications from influenza, COVID and RSV.

To view the full press release please click [here](#).

New York Expands Liquor Licenses To Modern Hospitality Venues

The New York State Liquor Authority is expanding the categories for who can apply for liquor licenses. According to a recent new article officials say the move is part of Governor Hochul's broader effort to modernize outdated laws and support economic growth in the state.

The guidance allows businesses such as pool halls, axe-throwing venues, virtual reality arcades, go-kart tracks, darts lounges, mini-golf courses, comedy clubs, paint-and-sip

studios, and cooking class studios to qualify for liquor licenses, provided they comply with state and local regulations and demonstrate responsible alcohol service.

"This is about helping modern hospitality businesses grow while maintaining responsible oversight," State Liquor Authority chair Lily Fan said in a statement.

"Governor Hochul has tasked us with reviewing outdated rules and modernizing our approach. New Yorkers are embracing social experiences that go beyond traditional restaurants and bars, and under the governor's leadership, our agency is evolving to meet that trend."

The advisory is consistent with the SLA's authority under an Alcoholic Beverage Control Law that permits licensing of "lawful adult entertainment or recreational facilities" at the agency's discretion. Updated regulations also allow the State Liquor Authority to expand eligibility beyond a fixed list of venue types.

The State Liquor Authority's modernization effort builds on a 2014 policy update to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, which included economic development, job creation, tourism, and agricultural support as core policy goals. It marks the first major update since the law's original enactment in 1934.

For more information please click [here](#).

Governor Hochul Announces Plan For The \$1 Billion Sustainable Future Program Supporting Climate Action And Jobs

This week Governor Hochul, while participating in the U.S Climate Alliance's roundtable, announced the next steps for her \$1 billion Sustainable Future Program which aims to advance clean energy, cut emissions and expand green infrastructure.

The latest part of the program is made up of:

- \$50 million that will be allocated to the EmPower+ program to provide low- and moderate-income residents with no-cost home energy assessments and energy efficiency upgrades
- \$50 million that will be used to help under-resourced public schools across the state decarbonize their building portfolios and improve indoor air quality for students and staff and reduce the schools' carbon footprint
- \$200 million that will expand thermal energy networks, which use a system of pipes to share heating and cooling resources among multiple buildings
- \$150 million that will support the launch of a new Green Small Buildings Program, administered by New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) to assist eligible homes with making energy-efficient upgrades, including heat pumps

- \$200 million that will be provided to the state Power Authority (NYPA) to finance multiple renewable energy generation projects

In addition, \$100 million to go to zero-emission school buses and their related infrastructure, at least \$50 million to support medium, and heavy-duty vehicle charging and at least \$50 million to provide rebates for EV charging stations at workplaces, multifamily buildings, and large public sector organizations.

“New York is a national leader in climate action, and we're proving that we can build a thriving green economy while protecting our planet,” Governor Hochul said. “While others may retreat, we are doubling down. The \$1 billion investment from our Sustainable Future Program will directly benefit New Yorkers by making our homes more energy-efficient, our schools healthier, and our communities more resilient. We are creating jobs, improving public health, and ensuring a just and affordable transition for every community.”

The Sustainable Future Program was announced by Governor Hochul in this year’s January State of the State address.

To view the Governors press release please click [here](#).

The Department of Justice is Suing NY and Five Other States For Statewide Voted Registration Lists

The Department of Justice is suing NY and 5 other states to compel them to share their statewide voter registration lists with the federal government, an unusual request that has drawn pushback from election officials in both parties in the past.

DOJ’s Civil Rights Division filed federal lawsuits Thursday against election officials in California, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and New Hampshire claiming the states violated federal law by refusing to share voter rolls with the Trump administration.

Access to voting rolls varies state by state, but the rolls are generally released to the public and government agencies with voters’ private data — like driver’s license numbers or the last four digits of Social Security numbers — redacted.

The DOJ’s lawsuits demand the rolls with that data included. Similar requests have been rebuffed by election officials across the country, both recently and in past years, out of privacy concerns and opposition to federal encroachment in state elections. Some officials have also tied the effort to President Donald Trump’s long history of spreading election misinformation, including falsely accusing states of allowing noncitizen immigrants to vote en masse.

Last week, the DOJ filed similar lawsuits against election officials in Maine and Oregon, prompting sharp rebukes from each state's top elections official.

"This is not normal," Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, said in a statement last week. "Trump's DOJ is using its immense federal power to try to intimidate us into turning over protected voter data and changing our voting processes to fit President Trump's whims."

Michigan, Minnesota and California have Democrats as their secretaries of state, while New Hampshire and Pennsylvania have Republican chief election officials. New York has a state board of elections. The lawsuits demand states to share highly sensitive information on voters, including Social Security numbers and driver's license numbers, as part of the administration's effort to create "clean voter rolls."

"Clean voter rolls are the foundation of free and fair elections," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement. "Every state has a responsibility to ensure that voter registration records are accurate, accessible, and secure — states that don't fulfill that obligation will see this Department of Justice in court."

In March, Trump signed an executive order directing DOJ and the Department of Homeland Security to take measures preventing noncitizens from voting in elections, a claim that has been largely deemed baseless.

DOJ has sent requests for voter rolls to over 30 states, according to data from the Brennan Center for Justice, a liberal think tank and advocacy organization.

Trump explored a similar measure during his first term. He established the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity in 2017 to examine cases of voter fraud.

The commission's request for private voter information was met with opposition from state officials in both parties before it was dissolved the following year, with a then-Republican secretary of state telling the commission to "go jump in the Gulf of Mexico" in response to broad requests.

For more information, please click [here](#).

President Trump Announced Import Taxes On Pharmaceutical Drugs, Kitchen Cabinets, Furniture And Heavy Trucks

According to press reports Thursday President Trump announced that he will put import taxes of 100% on pharmaceutical drugs, 50% on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, 30% on upholstered furniture and 25% on heavy trucks starting on Oct. 1.

While Trump did not provide a legal justification for the tariffs, he appeared to stretch the bounds of his role as commander-in-chief by stating on Truth Social that the taxes on

imported kitchen cabinets and sofas were needed “for National Security and other reasons.”

Under the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the administration launched a Section 232 investigation in April about the impacts on national security from pharmaceutical drug and truck imports. The Commerce Department launched a 232 investigation into timber and lumber in March, though it’s unclear whether the furniture tariffs stem from that. These new taxes on imports could pass through to consumers in the form of higher prices and dampen hiring, a process that economic data suggests is already underway.

“We have begun to see goods prices showing through into higher inflation,” Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned in a recent news conference, adding that higher costs for goods account for “most” or potentially “all” of the increase in inflation levels this year.

The president has pressured Powell to resign, arguing that the Fed should cut its benchmark interest rates more aggressively because inflation is no longer a concern. Fed officials have stayed cautious on rate cuts because of the uncertainty created by tariffs. Trump said on Truth Social that the pharmaceutical tariffs would not apply to companies that are building manufacturing plants in the United States, which he defined as either “breaking ground” or being “under construction.” It was unclear how the tariffs would apply to companies that already have factories in the U.S.

In 2024, America imported nearly \$233 billion in pharmaceutical and medicinal products, according to the Census Bureau. The prospect of prices doubling for some medicines could send shock waves to voters as health care expenses, as well as the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, potentially increase.

The pharmaceutical drug announcement was shocking as Trump has previously suggested that tariffs would be phased in over time so that companies had time to build factories and relocate production. On CNBC in August, Trump said he would start by charging a “small tariff” on pharmaceuticals and raise the rate over a year or more to 150% and even 250%.

According to the White House, the threat of tariffs earlier this year contributed to many major pharmaceutical companies, including Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, Roche, Bristol Myers Squibb and Eli Lilly, among others, to announce investments in U.S. production.

Pascal Chan, vice president for strategic policy and supply chains at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, warned that the tariffs could harm Americans’ health with “immediate price hikes, strained insurance systems, hospital shortages, and the real risk of patients rationing or foregoing essential medicines.”

The new tariffs on cabinetry could further increase the costs for homebuilders at a time when many people seeking to buy a house feel priced out by the mix of housing shortages and high mortgage rates. The National Association of Realtors on Thursday said there were signs of price pressures easing as sales listings increased 11.7% in August from a year ago, but the median price for an existing home was \$422,600.

Trump said that foreign-made heavy trucks and parts are hurting domestic producers that need to be defended. “Large Truck Company Manufacturers, such as Peterbilt, Kenworth, Freightliner, Mack Trucks, and others, will be protected from the onslaught of outside interruptions,” Trump posted.

Trump has long maintained that tariffs are the key to forcing companies to invest more in domestic factories. He has dismissed fears that importers would simply pass along much of the cost of the taxes to consumers and businesses in the form of higher prices. His broader country-by-country tariffs relied on declaring an economic emergency based on a 1977 law, a drastic tax hike that two federal courts said exceeded Trump’s authority as president. The Supreme Court is set to hear the case in November.

The president continues to claim that inflation is no longer a challenge for the U.S. economy, despite evidence to the contrary. The consumer price index has increased 2.9% over the past 12 months, up from an annual pace of 2.3% in April, when Trump first launched a sweeping set of import taxes.

Nor is there evidence that the tariffs are creating factory jobs or more construction of manufacturing facilities. Since April, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that manufacturers cut 42,000 jobs and builders have downsized by 8,000.

“There’s no inflation,” Trump told reporters Thursday. “We’re having unbelievable success.”

Still, Trump also acknowledged that his tariffs against China had hurt American farmers, who lost out on sales of soybeans. The president separately promised on Thursday to divert tariff revenues to the farmers hurt by the conflict, just as he did during his first term in 2018 and 2019 when his tariffs led to retaliation against the agricultural sector.

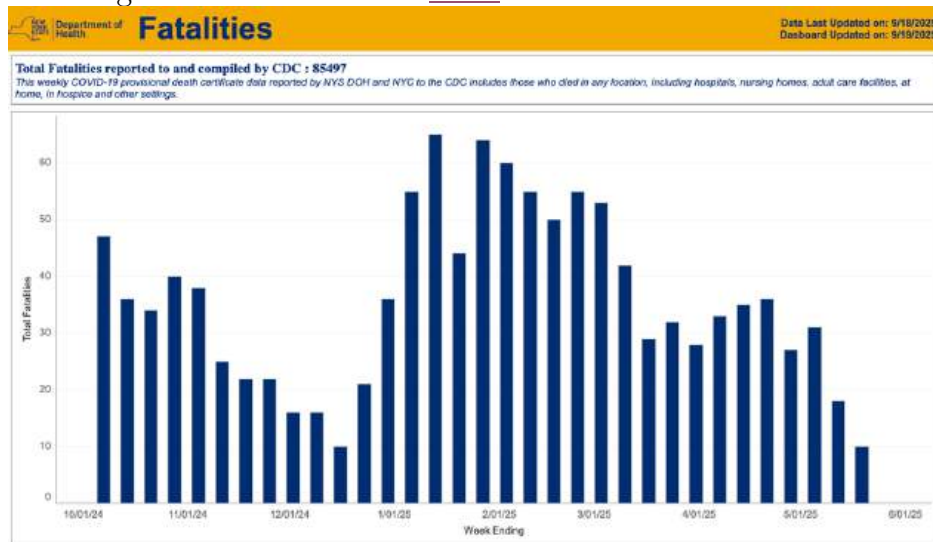
For more information please click [here](#).

NYS COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard

Use this link to view the State’s updated [COVID-19 Hub](#).

NYS COVID-19 Fatalities Tracker

Below we have included the Fatalities Tracker with the webpage where updated numbers can be found throughout the week linked [here](#).



Helpful Links and Resources

[Empire State Development Tariff Resource Guide](#)

[Eliminating Distractions In Schools Resource](#)

[RMS Final Budget Tax/Revenue Table](#)

[RMS SFY 2025-26 Final Budget H/MH Summary](#)

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Department of Financial Services information and resources](#)

[New York COVID-19 Vaccine Information Page](#)

Department of Health

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

[COVID-19 Guidance for Medicaid Providers](#)

Office of Mental Health

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/covid-19-resources.html>

OPWDD

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance>

State Education Department

<http://www.op.nysed.gov/COVID-19.html>

NYS Department of Labor

<https://dol.ny.gov/>