

‘Major incident’ in London as number of COVID patients soars



London mayor warns hospitals in the capital will be inundated and more will die unless action is taken swiftly.

London, January 8 (RHC)-- A “major incident” has been declared in London, with warnings hospitals in the UK capital could be overwhelmed with coronavirus patients if people do not stay at home.

“The stark reality is that we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically,” Sadiq Khan, London’s mayor, said in a statement on Friday, urging greater support from the central UK government.

“We are declaring a major incident because the threat this virus poses to our city is at a crisis point. If we do not take immediate action now, our NHS (National Health Service) could be overwhelmed and more people will die.”

The number of coronavirus patients in London’s hospital is 35 percent higher than during the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, and there are concerns admissions will continue to rise.

“Londoners continue to make huge sacrifices and I am today imploring them to please stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary for you to leave,” Khan said.

More than 1.1 million people had COVID-19 last week, equivalent to one in 50 people in the country, the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics said on Friday, rising to one in 30 people in the capital London as a new, more contagious variant spreads.

The UK’s total virus-related death toll is now 78,508. According to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University, the UK has the most COVID-related deaths in Europe and the fifth most in the world.

A “major incident” is defined as being “beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment or national security.”

The last “major incident” in London was declared following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 when 72 people died in Britain’s worst blaze in a residential building since WWII.

The mayor has written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson asking for greater financial support for Londoners who need to self-isolate. He has also requested daily vaccination data, the closure of places of worship and called on people to wear face masks routinely outside of the home.

On Thursday, health secretary Matt Hancock said the UK was making preparations in case London was overwhelmed by COVID-19 infections, comments that came amid reports hospitals in the capital could be inundated with patients within two weeks.

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