

States report vaccine shortages and cancel appointments

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The push to inoculate Americans against the coronavirus is hitting a roadblock: A number of states are reporting they are running out of vaccine, and tens of thousands of people who managed to get appointments for a first dose are seeing them canceled.

Karen Stachowiak, a first-grade teacher in the Buffalo area, spent almost five hours on the state hot line and website to land an appointment for Wednesday, only to be told it was canceled. The Erie County Health Department said it scratched vaccinations for over 8,000 people in the past few days because of inadequate supply.

"It's stressful because I was so close. And my other friends that are teachers, they were able to book appointments for last Saturday," Stachowiak said. "So many people are getting theirs in, and then it's like, 'Nope, I've got to wait.'"

The reason for the apparent mismatch between supply and demand in the U.S. was unclear, but last week the Health and Human Services Department suggested that states had unrealistic

expectations for how much vaccine was on the way.

In any case, new shipments go out every week, and both the government and the drugmakers have said there are large quantities in the pipeline.

The shortages are coming as states dramatically ramp up their vaccination drives, at the federal government's direction, to reach people 65 and older, along with others deemed essential or at high risk, such as teachers and police. More than 400,000 deaths in the U.S. have been blamed on the virus.

President Joe Biden, who was inaugurated on Wednesday, immediately came under pressure to fix things. He has made it clear that his administration will take a stronger hand in attacking the crisis, and he vowed to administer 100 million shots in his first 100 days.

Less than half of the 36 million doses distributed to the states by the [federal government](#) have been administered so far, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public health officials have said the gap could reflect recordkeeping delays as well as disarray and other failings at various levels of government in actually getting shots into arms.

In a statement, HHS said that jurisdictions actually received about a 5% increase in vaccine allocations this week from what they got in the past couple of weeks. That is because the government discontinued the practice of holding large amounts of vaccine in reserve as a hedge against production delays that could prevent people from getting their second shot on time.

Countries across Europe are also having problems getting enough doses to provide protection against a virus that is now appearing in new, more contagious variants around the globe.

Pfizer said last week it would temporarily reduce deliveries to Europe and Canada while it upgrades capacity at its plant in Belgium, which supplies all shots delivered outside the United States. Pfizer's primary site for manufacturing vaccine for the U.S. is in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

In the U.S., some states have suggested they may run out by Thursday and are unclear when new doses will arrive.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said Wednesday that the city had to cancel 23,000 appointments for people awaiting their first dose this week. The New York Police Department suspended first-shot vaccinations for its officers.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he expects the state to exhaust its supply of vaccine within two or three days for people seeking their first dose.

"What's clear now is we'll be going from week to week, and you will see a constant pattern of basically running out, waiting for the next week's allocation, and starting up again," he said. He urged [health care facilities](#) not to schedule appointments to dispense vaccine they haven't been allocated yet.

In Florida, local media reported a similar problem in the Miami area, where the Baptist Health care system canceled appointments for first doses.

"I could have blown the top of my head off with steam," 76-year-old Charlotte Reeve told The Miami Herald. "I'm also a fairly recent widow. To me, having to be locked up in my house alone is just devastating to me. ... I feel like I just got cut off at the knees, again."

San Francisco's health department said it is likely to run out of vaccine on Thursday, in part because the state pulled back on administering a batch of Moderna shots after several health workers suffered what may have been a bad reaction. The county health department received 12,000 doses last week but fewer than 2,000 this week.

In a statement, Moderna said that it is on track to deliver 100 million doses by the end of the first

quarter of the year and 200 million by the end of the second quarter.

Pfizer, the maker of the other vaccine used in the U.S., said it duly filled the government's orders over the past two weeks. It said it is working around the clock to produce millions more doses each day and foresees no problems in meeting its commitment to deliver 200 million by the end of July.

West Virginia, which has run one of the speediest vaccination drives in the country, said it didn't receive an expected increase in doses this week. With 99.6% of first doses on hand already administered, officials are clamoring for more.

"Here we are with no vaccines," said Republican Gov. Jim Justice, fretting that other states have doses sitting unused. "We've got them all in people's arms, and we've done exactly what we should have done. ... I think performance ought to be rewarded."

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine pleaded with the new Biden administration for more doses as the state struggles with high hospitalizations and a death toll that has passed 10,000.

"We are not lacking the infrastructure," DeWine said in a letter. "We are lacking the vaccine."

Hawaii leaders complained that the state received 59,000 doses last week but expects only about 32,000 this week.

In New York State, Barbara Carr, a 72-year-old retiree in Buffalo, was distraught when her [vaccine](#) appointment for Thursday was canceled. But she was able to quickly get another appointment at a pharmacy and received her first dose.

Now she is worried about her two children, who are teachers. Their appointments were canceled.

"They have had no luck with rescheduling, no phone calls, no communication whatsoever other than 'You're canceled,'" Carr said. "The poor teachers. ... I can stay home so I can hide from the virus. They can't."

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