



## Public Health Brief

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Monday February 7, 2022

# USA Surpasses 900,000 COVID-Related Deaths Alpine County Reports Another Tragic Death

Two years into the pandemic, the United States recorded its 900,000th COVID-related fatality on Friday, according to data from [Johns Hopkins University](#).

With the permission of the family, Alpine County also reports the death of Michael Gard, a 79 year old long-time resident and dedicated volunteer with Eastern Alpine Fire for many years. His wife sadly relates that “we did everything right” – vaccinated with booster and masked. However, even with these layers of protection, being around others who may not be vaccinated and/or are not masked puts anyone of us at risk. Certainly those of us who are older and who may have underlying medical conditions absorb the bulk of the risk, but no one is totally immune to the potential consequences of an infection with COVID-19.

The number of deaths has continued to rise since the rollout of our vaccine program on December 23, 2020, when the death count was around 300,000. The nation recorded 600,000 deaths in mid-June 2021, 700,000 on Oct. 1, and 800,000 less than two months ago, on Dec. 14.

Though COVID case counts are dropping in 49 states, the sheer number of Omicron cases has resulted in an average of 2,400 deaths a day, the most since last winter. Hospitalizations are also dropping, although still at a very high and unacceptable level. This is stressing our health care system to a near breaking point, especially since 20-25%



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of the healthcare workers have left the workforce due to the incredible and unrelenting stress and risk to their own health and that of their families over the last 100 plus weeks.

Ashish K. Jha, MD, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, notes that most of the deaths occurred after the FDA authorized COVID vaccines. "We got the medical science right. We failed on the social science," Jha [told The Associated Press](#). "We failed on how to help people get vaccinated, to combat disinformation, to not politicize this. Those are the places where we have failed as America."

Jha said the U.S. could hit the 1 million mark in COVID deaths by March. The U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) says 75.5% of the U.S. population has gotten at least one dose of vaccine, 64% is fully vaccinated, and 42% has gotten a booster dose. Alpine County's numbers are definitely better than that. Exact numbers are impossible to come by since many residents have received their vaccinations in pharmacies in other counties or across the state line in Nevada.

Unvaccinated people are pushing the death count. In November, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, said that the number of average weekly deaths for those who were unvaccinated was 9.7 per 100,000 people, as compared with .7 of those who were vaccinated and .1 of those who had received a booster. That translates to a risk 97 times greater for those unvaccinated compared to those vaccinated and boosted.

The United States had recorded 901,392 COVID-related deaths as of Saturday morning, according to Johns Hopkins, the most in the world. The U.S. is followed by Brazil with 631,264 deaths and India with 501,114. Health experts say the death count is probably much higher, since some COVID deaths aren't diagnosed.

Still need your vaccine or booster?

Call 530-694-2146, Option 1 to make it happen!

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