

Covid-positive cases hits record daily high as Western Cape countdown to New Year begins



By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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At midnight last night Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, gazetted amendments to Adjusted Alert Level 1 Covid-19 regulations.



Source: [Pixabay](#)

This follows a statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa which lifts the midnight to 4am curfew, permits the sale of alcohol and allows for a maximum of 1000 people to gather indoors.

This, while the Western Cape's Covid-19 positive cases hits a record daily average high of 4000 Covid-19 positive cases a day and citizens begin celebrating in the 2022-countdown.

"The Disaster Declaration is a tool that's been used for too long," Premier Alan Winde said on Wednesday at the Western Cape Government digicon presentation. "Right now I think it's the citizens who need to take responsibility.

"We need to find new ways of living with the next waves [of the pandemic] and create a new normal environment where citizens and government play their role together in a responsible way."

This statement comes on the back of Winde's announcement at his digicon presentation on Wednesday, saying he fully supports the ending of the Disaster Declaration and curfew being lifted. He confirmed he had submitted his request, to immediately revoke the declaration, to the President's co-ordinating council that morning.

4000 new cases a day

The National Disaster Declaration was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 15 March 2020, in a national address, which saw subsequent restrictions on movement, business activity, travel and other matters, all in the interests of preventing an escalation of the Covid-19 national disaster and alleviating, containing and minimising its effects.

Nevertheless, the rescinding of the current laws around curfew could see a resurgence of positive Covid-19 cases in the week to come as New Year celebrations take off this evening. This, despite recent government statistics saying the Western Cape is starting to see the plateauing of new cases, with the proportion of tests coming back positive starting to decline.

This caution aligns with Dr K Cloete's statement at Wednesday's Western Cape Government's digicon presentation, where he said: "We have not come out of the peak yet: it is a slowing of cases at the peak. We are cautious about it because of the public holidays and the restricted testing that may influence the case numbers. We continue to see high case numbers, averaging about **4000 new cases a day, the highest for any of the waves.**"



Amendments to Covid-19 regulations gazetted

31 Dec 2021



2 deaths a day

Yet, despite the highest daily new cases to date, Winde says statistics point to low Covid-19 related hospital admissions in the Western Cape with 217 new hospital admissions on average per day. Those in high care and ICU remain relatively low. The number of new deaths is low at 2 deaths on average a day. There has been a 48% decline in deaths over the last week.

"While the case numbers and test positivity rate during the fourth wave have exceeded previous waves, hospital admissions are below the peak of both the second and the third wave and deaths remain extremely low, in line with previous interwave periods. There is therefore a widening gap between these metrics, pointing to less severe disease during the fourth wave.

"Overall, according to our data, the risk of admission is 30% lower in the fourth wave when compared to the third wave, and the risk of admission for severe disease is 60% less during the fourth wave than during the third wave. A key marker for our health platform trigger system remains oxygen usage. Our increase in oxygen consumption remains below 50%, meaning that the Western Cape remains on the lowest level of our "trigger" system."

Commenting on the Disaster Declaration, Winde said: "Even before the fourth wave we were in a position where we were ready to present to the President's co-ordinating Council on this. Of course the fourth wave came along, and we didn't know what the variant was going to be doing. It's evident from Dr Cloete's research that our hospital system is not burdened like it was in previous waves.

"I welcome us ending curfew."

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Get vaccinated

Winde urged citizens to get vaccinated.

"What is clear is that vaccines provide important protection against severe disease in those who are fully vaccinated, and that getting vaccinated remains a critical way to protect yourself, to stay out of hospital and to prevent death," Winde said.

"Initial raw data analysed by the Western Cape Department of Health shows vaccines are highly effective in preventing death from Covid-19. Our top priority remains to ensure that those who are at greatest risk of severe disease and death get vaccinated. That is why we have focused our vaccination programme on reaching residents who are 50 years old and older."

. Despite the government amendments to Adjusted Alert Level 1 Covid-19 regulations, the wearing of masks in public places is still mandatory, and failure to wear a mask when required remains a criminal offence.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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