



CALIFORNIA

Coronavirus outbreak at Terminal Island prison worsens:
5 dead, 600 infected



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With the number of Terminal Island prison inmates testing positive for the coronavirus climbing to 600 — nearly 60% of the San Pedro penitentiary population — federal prison officials said Thursday that another three inmates had died of COVID-19 issues, bringing the facility's death toll to five.

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The prison's surging number of coronavirus cases follows mass testing of more than 1,000 inmates by Los Angeles County Public Health officials, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The facility now accounts for more than a third of documented federal prison inmates with the coronavirus. Ten staff members also have COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Federal officials said Thursday that public health officials had tested even those without symptoms and that only 1 in 10 of those checked had signs of illness.

The number of positive inmates jumped late Wednesday from 443 to 600 in the San Pedro prison, which houses 1,053 on L.A.'s waterfront.

Prison officials said Thursday that three inmates died Wednesday after being on ventilators at hospitals.

Steve Cino, 54, was taken to hospital on April 15 and placed on a ventilator five days later. Before his death Wednesday, he tested positive for COVID-19. Federal prison officials said Cino had long-term, preexisting medical conditions. He was serving a sentence of 24 years and three months for conspiracy to distribute oxycodone and methamphetamine and money laundering conspiracy. He had been at Terminal Island since January.

Rex Damon Begay Sr., 80, tested positive April 19 and was taken to the hospital the next day, where he was placed on a ventilator. He died Wednesday. Begay was sentenced in Arizona to 10 years in prison for abusive sexual contact with a minor younger than 12 years. He had been at Terminal Island since April 2016.

Inmates Michael Fleming, 59, and Bradley James Ghilarducci, 73, died last week. Both had preexisting medical conditions, officials said. Fleming was serving a 20-year sentence for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. Ghilarducci was serving an eight-year sentence for receiving and distributing child sexual abuse imagery.

A fifth inmate from Terminal Island died Thursday of COVID-19 related issues.

Leonard Auerbach, 73, was a former Orinda mortgage finance expert sentenced to 15 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to producing child pornography, charges stemming from him taking explicit photos and videos of a girl that he had sex with in Costa Rica. Auerbach was extradited from Cuba after he fled there in 2008 after he was charged.

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