



# Zamboanga sees another COVID spike

**City's active infections jump to 1,101 from a low of 112 in early August; health execs link surge to community transmission of Delta variant**

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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**SECURITY CHECK** A police officer manning a quarantine checkpoint in Zamboanga City stops a motorist to check his documents as the local government tightens health protocols due to a recent surge in COVID-19 infections. —PHOTO COURTESY OF ZAMBOANGA CITY INFORMATION OFFICE

**ZAMBOANGA CITY**—After reaching its lowest COVID-19 case count over a month ago, infections in this city have spiked anew, breaching the 1,000-mark in active cases, data from the City Health Office showed.

On Wednesday, the city recorded 111 new cases, bringing the total active cases to 1,101. Of these, 1,075 were attributed to a community transmission of the virus.

Mayor Maria Isabelle Salazar described the recent spike in cases as “alarming,” prompting her to remind residents to be vigilant and continue observing health protocols.

She also called on the public to avail of vaccines so they could be protected against severe infection and avoid hospital confinement or death.

The active cases first went past 1,000 on Sunday with 177 new cases counted that day.

The city experienced a surge in cases in May, forcing authorities to impose more restrictive quarantine measures. The city was under modified enhanced community quarantine in May and June, which was downgraded to general community quarantine from July 1 until Sept. 30.

The infections slowed beginning July, reaching a low of only six new cases on Aug. 9 and with

active cases at 112.

About 74 percent of the cases are concentrated in 20 of the city's 98 villages with the highest in Tetuan (100), Santa Maria (74) and Tumaga (70).

### More deaths

Between Aug. 9 and Sept. 21, health authorities counted 60 more deaths, or at least one patient dying a day.

The local government said granular lockdowns have been imposed in areas and communities with confirmed cases.

The recent increase in total COVID-19 cases came with the rise in infections traced to the highly transmissible Delta variant.

City health officer Dulce Miravite said Delta cases in the city reached 19 after genome se-

quencing confirmed 12 new cases.

These patients have infected family members, following contact tracing by health authorities.

Two patients—a 57-year-old man in Tugbungan village and a 35-year-old pregnant woman in Lumbangan village—each infected 10 people, resulting in a sudden swell in community transmission of the virus.

Delta infections were also recorded in the villages of Sinunuc, Santa Maria, Putik, Cabatangan, Mercedes, Tumaga and Calarian.

### Cebu numbers drop

In Cebu City, local hospitals have been classified under the safe zone as the number of admissions due to COVID-19 dropped after a month of tight restrictions.

Councilor Joel Garganera,

the deputy chief implementer of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), said all four public and 11 private hospitals in the city were no longer overwhelmed with patients.

Garganera said hospital occupancy was at 47.6 percent for public hospitals and 51.6 percent for private hospitals as of Sept. 21.

Last month, the occupancy rate reached nearly 80 percent.

“The daily cases of COVID-19 in the city have dropped, which resulted in fewer admissions at the city's hospitals,” Garganera said.

The death toll, however, continues to increase but is lower compared to figures recorded in August.

Based on the EOC data, at least 80 residents of Cebu City died this month. In August, the number of fatalities reached 292.

Garganera encouraged the public to continue observing health protocols and get vaccinated.

Dr. Mary Jean Loreche, spokesperson for the Visayas Vaccination Operations Center, said the government would do its best to protect its people against the virus.

“Our containment measures, including all the protocols that we have set in place that have worked for us during the first and second waves [of infection], are still effective with the most recent Delta-driven surge,” she said.

As of Sept. 21, Cebu City recorded 2,507 active cases of COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic in March last year, the city logged 39,955 cases, with 36,118 recoveries and 1,330 deaths. —WITH A REPORT FROM NESTLE SEMILLA INQ