

FCC ISSUES REPORT – 1st Quarter 2020
Jan-Mar
KABC-TV

ABC7 -CORE ISSUES
1st Quarter 2020

CORE ISSUES

ABC7 gave significant coverage to the following community issues and concerns arising in the first quarter of 2020:

- 1. Health**
- 2. Community**
- 3. Politics**
- 4. Weather**

The station's coverage of these core issues is detailed in the next section of this report.

ABC7 - CORE ISSUES COVERAGE
1st Quarter 2020

HEALTH

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: January 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31. February 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.**

Total Coverage: 2 Days 6 Hours

ABC7 Eyewitness News covered at length the various health topics of interest to its Southern California audience. Without a doubt, the most covered topic on everyone's mind, both around the world and in Los Angeles, was in regards to the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

ABC7 began reporting on COVID-19 back in January, when health officials first announced that they would begin screening passengers at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) for the coronavirus on those passengers arriving from Central China. At that time, only two people in China had died. Then the first case in the United States was confirmed in Washington State. Los Angeles County would see its first case at the end of January. The patient had come through LAX.

In February, *Eyewitness News* continued to inform its viewers on the growing number of COVID-19 cases around the world, but focused on the implications on the local level. One such story told how the coronavirus was threatening California's lobster industry. Most of the lobster caught off places like Santa Barbara were shipped to China. But when China closed its imported seafood market in January because of the virus, fishermen were left with a lot of extra lobsters, forcing them to drop their prices from \$15 to just \$8 a pound. The fishermen were then forced to find other places nationally and internationally to sell them.

ABC7 covered the global pandemic in every newscast, every day in the month of March. Whether the station was covering the impact of closing all non-essential local businesses, or broadcasting live conferences from the White House and local officials, the station continued to make sure its audience was up to date on the latest information regarding the virus and its devastating affects. One way the station passed along information to its viewers was by holding a two-hour virtual town hall, hosted by KABC health specialist Denise Dador. The ABC7 Coronavirus Emergency Virtual Town Hall assembled a team of experts from UCLA Health to answer viewer questions and concerns about COVID-19.

ABC7 Eyewitness News also reported on the station's virtual telethon, which they hosted in partnership with the Los Angeles Rams and ESPNLA for the benefit of the United Way Pandemic Relief Fund and the LA Regional Food Bank. It was a fund-raising drive on television with no special studio sets, no collection location, and no external activations. Instead everyone was physically distanced, interviews were done on skype, and the phone bank was made of volunteers answering phones in their own homes. The efforts together raised over \$2.2 million dollars and counting.

COMMUNITY

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: January 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. February 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.**

Total Coverage: 1 Day 21 Hours 23 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News reported on community happenings that affected the station's viewing area in the first quarter of 2020. One topic of particular interest to Angelenos concerned the untimely death of Los Angeles Lakers basketball legend Kobe Bryant.

ABC7 devoted significant airtime on how the helicopter carrying nine passengers – Kobe Bryant; his 13-year-old daughter Gianna, her teammates, 13-year-olds Alyssa Altobelli and Payton Chester; their parents, Keri and John Altobelli (head baseball coach at Orange Coast College) and Sarah Chester; basketball assistant coach Christina Mauser; and pilot Ara Zobayan – all died when it crashed in late January. The helicopter had left from John Wayne Airport in Orange County, California, on its way to a basketball game at Bryant's Mamba Sports Academy in Newbury Park, where Bryant was scheduled to coach Gianna's team.

Eyewitness News reported on how the helicopter crashed and caught fire in Calabasas, California, after flying for about 40 minutes. At the time, weather conditions in Calabasas were reported to be foggy. The helicopter came down between two groups of mountain bikers who called 9-1-1. Witnesses reported that the helicopter's engine was "sputtering" before the crash. Others reported seeing the helicopter flying into the ground at a "fairly significant rate of speed." It is unclear whether a distress call was made. The exact cause of the crash is still under investigation.

ABC7 covered the subsequent tributes to the beloved retired NBA player. At the Citadel Outlets in the city of Commerce, there was a giant lighted poster of Kobe. The Forum in Inglewood – where the Lakers used to play – was lit up in Lakers purple. And the pylons at the Los Angeles International Airport also displayed Lakers colors. A local artist, "Artoon" painted a mural of Kobe and his daughter Gianna on the wall of "VEM" luxury car rental in Studio City, California. It featured an iconic image of Kobe biting his jersey looking up, and a smiling Gianna is beside him, also looking up. It is only one of the many tribute murals that have popped up across the Southland.

The station also broadcasted the public memorial service for Kobe and his daughter at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, where he spent his entire NBA career. It was held on February 24th, a date chosen to reflect the basketball jersey numbers worn by Kobe, #24, and by Gianna, #2. Organizers had handed out 20,000 tickets, but at least 90,000 people registered to try to attend. Proceeds from the ticket sales were donated to the Kobe's foundation, "Mamba and Mambacita Sports Foundation." Fans were urged to stay away if they didn't have a ticket and to instead watch it on television.

POLITICS

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: January 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31. February 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31.**

Total Coverage: 10 Hours 37 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News reported on a variety of political issues at the local level. Significant airtime, however, was devoted to the homeless crisis in Southern California.

ABC7 reported on how California Governor Newsom had said in his State of the State address that California's homeless crisis was a disgrace, and that it was a top priority of his to fix this year (a statement made prior to the coronavirus pandemic). He had stated that he wanted all new shelters and supportive housing to be exempt from a key environmental law. He had also hinted at the creation of a permanent stream of revenue focused on homelessness, something that could raise taxes. The state has already spent hundreds of millions of dollars to try to solve the problem, only to see it get worse. Nearly 25% of the entire country's homeless population lives in California.

On the local level, *Eyewitness News* covered how Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and community leaders celebrated the opening of the “first” supportive housing development funded by Proposition HHH. Proposition HHH was sold to LA voters as a funding mechanism to get at least 10,000 Angelenos, and likely more, off the street and into permanent housing. That housing is supposed to come with accompanying services, like counseling, to help people stay housed, thereby earning the moniker of “supportive housing.” Located at 88th and Vermont, the development features dozens of permanent units for transitional-aged youth, veterans, and families with special needs experiencing chronic homelessness. There are an additional 14 units for very low-income families and individuals. The Mayor said that it was only the beginning.

ABC7 also included solution stories in its reporting of the city’s homeless crisis. Every day, the Los Angeles Fire Department answers an average of 2100 calls. A growing number of those calls involved the homeless. But an innovative program launched by LAFD has proven to be a success. They unveiled the Fast Response Vehicle. The vehicle is designed specifically to help with the increasing calls from the homeless population. The Department now has four Fast Response Vehicles – in all four geographic bureaus – to respond to fire and emergency medical service calls. The firefighter/paramedics assigned to the vehicles can support LAPD/SWAT teams. They can also medically clear certain patients, and take them to either a Mental Health Urgent Care Center or a Sobering Center. This is instead of taking them to a hospital emergency room.

WEATHER

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: January 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 29. February 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 21, 25, 27. March 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 23. Total Coverage: 3 Hours 2 Minutes**

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted airtime on Weather issues during the first quarter of 2020. The main focus pertained to the return of drought-like conditions in California.

Viewers of ABC7 were informed on how despite a series of very wet storms last fall, officials reported that a significantly dry winter had left much of the state in dire need of rain. Also concerning, the Sierra snowpack, which supplies nearly one-third of California's water, was at 58% by mid-February, down 92% since New Year's Day.

According to U.S. government forecasters, January 2020 was the hottest January since scientists started keeping temperature records in 1880. The global average land and ocean surface temperature in January was more than two degrees Fahrenheit above the average January temperatures for the 20th century. Scientists also recorded a new record temperature for Antarctica – roughly 68 degrees Fahrenheit. A map released by the U.S. Drought Monitor showed that the drought had expanded to nearly a quarter of the state, mainly in central California, and that 70% of the state was abnormally dry. All this led to concerns of possible increases in wildfire activity.