

Monday's increase was lower than the new cases reported the same day a week earlier. On Jan. 18, the state added 1,109 new covid cases to the total count.

The state's death toll from the virus rose Monday by 44 to 4,650, as tracked by the Arkansas Department of Health.

"While we saw a significant decline in new cases, our testing was also lower," Hutchinson said Monday in a statement. "An additional 44 deaths and a slight increase in hospitalizations remind us of the challenge we continue to face with this pandemic and what happens if we don't follow health department guidelines."

There were 6,486 polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, tests, and 357 antigen tests reported Monday -- significantly lower than the previous Monday when 8,432 PCR and 323 antigen tests were recorded.

"Testing availability tends to go down on the weekend, and today's numbers are in line with that," the state epidemiologist, Dr. Jennifer Dillaha, said.

Dillaha added that case numbers continue to fall because Arkansans have made changes that reduce community spread and "being on the backside of the holiday surge" also helps the numbers come down.

"My big concern would be activities that could occur around spring break," Dillaha said. "But we also still need to be mindful of religious holidays, especially with Easter coming up."

Outbreaks in church congregations are continuing, Dillaha said.

Health Department spokesman Gavin Lesnick said the department does not have numbers on transmission from within churches.

"We do ask cases about where they have been in the two weeks prior to infection," Lesnick said. "This doesn't necessarily mean a case was infected in one of these places, just that they went there during their infectious period."

The state reported yesterday the latest numbers for cases and deaths in the state:

In Miller County 3257 cases with 28 deaths, Little River County 1002 cases with 39 deaths recorded, Sevier County 2316 cases with 25 deaths, Lafayette County 432 cases with 7 confirmed deaths, and Hempstead County 1576 cases with 13 deaths.