

FCC ISSUES REPORT – 4th Quarter 2019

Oct-Dec

KABC-TV

ABC7 -CORE ISSUES

4th Quarter 2019

CORE ISSUES

ABC7 gave significant coverage to the following community issues and concerns arising in the fourth quarter of 2019:

- 1. Community**
- 2. Weather/Wildfire Danger**
- 3. Politics**
- 4. Health**

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

COMMUNITY

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: October 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. November 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. December 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: 1 Day 14 Hours 33 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News reported on community happenings that affected the station's viewing area in the fourth quarter of 2019. One topic of particular interest to Angelenos concerned the new rule enforced by the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) regarding rideshare services and taxis dropping off and picking up passengers at the airport.

ABC7 devoted significant airtime on how the airport would no longer allow curbside drop offs and pick-ups by rideshare companies and moved all ride-hailing pick-ups to the new "LAX-it" lot, a dedicated pickup space adjacent to Terminal 1 at the airport back in late October 2019. Regardless of the arrival terminal, travelers now had to take a bus (or walk) to this lot if they wanted to use Uber, Lyft or taxis.

The move, airport officials had said, was part of the plan to alleviate traffic as construction continues on an automated people mover that is set to be running by 2023 — ideally well ahead of the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. While it is viewed as a temporary strategy to combat worsening congestion until LAX's new Automated People Mover, including a new transportation center east of the terminals, opening in 2023, the situation quickly escalated from bad to worse.

Eyewitness News reported on how only after the first day of implementation, many of the travelers at LAX said how the new rideshare and taxi shuttle pick-up the airport was a nightmare. Many travelers mentioned how it was confusing and how the lines were long, and that it took them about 45 minutes to an hour to catch their ride. Airport officials had said they were making adjustments and would continue to do so during the first week of the program's launch.

ABC7 then reported on how after the first week, many users were still frustrated. Everyone from riders to drivers and even airport workers expressed serious concerns. Passengers said lines to get the shuttle buses at the terminal were long, that the wait to get to their ride-share vehicle was even longer, and some rides were costing more than they did before. Complaints were just as long as the lines.

To help combat the problem, the airport had opened a new lot for rideshares. The pickup up area is 50-percent larger after it added three new lanes of traffic to get in and out of the lot, including a separate area for Lyft drivers. With Lyft having its own designated area, more lanes were then freed up for UBER and taxis. Still, only time will tell if those changes are enough, as passengers wondered what will happen during peak hours, when things get more crowded.

WEATHER/WILDFIRE DANGER

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

Total Coverage: 2 Days 12 Hours 21 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted noteworthy airtime on Weather/Wildfire Danger issues during the fourth quarter of 2019. Significant airtime was given to coverage of the Saddleridge Fire that burned near the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles County, California. It broke out on October 10, 2019 during a highly anticipated Santa Ana wind event. It is still undetermined as to how it had started, but believed that the blaze had started beneath a high voltage transmission tower.

The station covered how while burning in a mixture of wild land and urban interface, firefighters were tasked initially with structure protection as the fire loomed to 200 acres within its first hour. By early morning the next day, the high winds had blown embers half a mile west of the main fire line, jumping Interstate 5, and triggered spot fires in the foothills above Porter Ranch where the fire continued to burn.

Viewers of ABC7 were informed on how thousands of people woke up in evacuation centers after the Saddleridge Fire forced them from their homes. The Red Cross opened several shelters, and after some reached capacity quickly, additional centers were set up. Some of those evacuees spent the night at the Northridge Recreation Center. Many just had enough time to grab the essentials.

Eyewitness News reported on how by sunrise on October 11th, the fire was reportedly well over 4,500 acres with an estimated 25 structures either damaged or destroyed. The fire had also reportedly lead to the death of a man in his late 50's when he went into cardiac arrest amid the fire. One firefighter was hospitalized with a minor eye injury while over 1,000 personnel were on scene battling the blaze by this point. Due to the Saddleridge fire's dramatic push towards the several highly populated communities within the San Fernando Valley, up to 23,000 homes were placed under mandatory evacuation, leaving over 100,000 residents displaced at the fire's peak.

A little over a week after the fire started, the Los Angeles Fire Department released information regarding the fire and the efforts to contain it. The size of the fire had grown to a sizeable 8,391 acres with 19 structures being destroyed and another 88 being damaged. Out of the 1,047 personnel that was assigned to contain the fire, eight firefighters suffered non-life threatening injuries while battling the flames.

POLITICS

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

Total Coverage: 15 Hours 33 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News reported on a variety of political issues at the local level. Significant airtime, however, was devoted to the resignation of California Democratic Representative Katie Hill after a conservative political blog published allegations that Hill was involved in an extramarital affair with her campaign finance manager. Hill, who represents California's 25th congressional district, covering parts of Santa Clarita, Palmdale, Lancaster and Simi Valley, called the whole thing a "smear campaign" and denied the allegations, saying that her estranged husband, whom she described as "abusive", was doing everything he could to humiliate her, and that her political opponents were exploiting a private matter for political gain. In a statement, Hill had said, "I am saddened that the deeply personal matter of my divorce has been brought into public view and the vindictive claims of my ex have now involved the lives and reputations of unrelated parties." The blog had also published nude photos of Hill as part of the story and had alleged that she had had more than one inappropriate relationship with staff members.

ABC7 reported on how the House Ethics Committee launched an investigation into allegations that Congresswoman Hill violated chamber rules by engaging in a sexual relationship with a staffer in her office. If proven to be true, it would have been in violation of House ethics reforms that were implemented in 2018 in response to the #MeToo movement. Hill also sent an email to constituents in which she admitted to an "inappropriate relationship" with a campaign staffer before becoming a representative (and therefore out of scope of the Congressional investigation) and promised to cooperate with the Congressional ethics investigation regarding allegations of wrongdoing as a member of Congress.

Eyewitness News covered Hill's announcement via Twitter that she would resign from Congress. She wrote, "This is the hardest thing I have ever had to do, but I believe it is the best thing for my constituents and our country." Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said Hill made "some errors in judgment that made her continued service as a Member untenable." Hill had vowed to combat revenge porn after photos of her were leaked.

In the meantime, several people expressed interest in replacing Hill in Congress, including Democratic Assemblywoman Christy Smith, as well Steve Knight, the Republican incumbent ousted by Hill last year. George Papadopoulos, a former Trump campaign adviser who spent 14 days in prison for making false statements to the FBI, filed official paperwork with the FEC to run for Hill's vacant seat as a Republican. Governor Gavin Newsom has set May 12, 2020 for the special election to fill the congressional seat left open when Katie Hill resigned.

ABC7 Eyewitness News covered Hill's last speech to Congress, where she said there was a "double standard" and "misogynistic culture" that resulted in her decision to step down from her position when faced with allegations of an improper relationship with a staff person. She also said, "I'm leaving, but we have men who have been credibly accused of intentional acts of sexual violence and remain in boardrooms, on the Supreme Court, in this very body, and worst of all, in the Oval Office." She closed by saying, "as my final act I voted to move forward with the impeachment of Donald Trump on behalf of the women of the United States of America."

HEALTH

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

Total Coverage: 4 Hours 57 Minutes

ABC7 Eyewitness News covered at length on the various health topics that interest its Southern California audience. One major topic that continues to be of concern for viewers is on vaping related deaths and illnesses.

ABC7 covered how the LA County board of supervisors unanimously voted to ban flavored tobacco products and called for a statewide ban on vaping. Long Beach was the latest southland city voting to ban the sale of all vaping and flavored tobacco products. That ban will be in place until the city's health department can prepare a thorough program to address the public health concerns associated with the products. The calls for change come amidst a nationwide outbreak of vaping-related illnesses and deaths. Across the country, there have been a total of 54 deaths linked to vaping products among 27 states and the District of Columbia.

In fourth quarter of 2019, five more vaping related lung illnesses had been reported in LA County, bringing the total in the county to 21 cases. Officials said that two-thirds of the cases were in people 25 or younger. All but one patient reported using both e-cigarettes and cannabis-type products (the one person used a flavored liquid with no nicotine, THC or CBD). Meanwhile, investigators trying to pinpoint the cause of vaping-related deaths and illnesses nationwide are taking a close look at cartridges that go by the name "Dank." They are unlicensed, untested and popular in the underground marijuana economy, and have been frequently mentioned by patients treated for vaping problems. Health officials continued their call for people to stop vaping immediately.

Eyewitness News reported on the Vaping Prevention town hall at Manhattan Beach Middle school where Assembly member Al Muratsuchi and Beach Cities Health District co-hosted the event. Experts and school representatives spoke on the growing vaping epidemic that included a discussion on the dangers of vaping, how to know if your child is vaping, and how to talk to your child about it.

The station also brought to viewers' attention on how the CDC had identified a compound, vitamin E acetate, as a "strong culprit" in vaping-related lung injuries. The compound has been used as a thickening agent in vaping fluid: particularly in cartridges sold on the black market.

ABC7 reported on how in November 2019, the American Medical Association called for a total and immediate ban on all vaping products. The move came during a meeting of the AMA's policy board, held in San Diego. The AMA cited the surge in teen e-cigarette use, and also the recent outbreak of serious and sometimes fatal lung illnesses linked to vaping.