

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST DEATH IN VIRGINIA ASSOCIATED WITH H1N1 VIRUS

(RICHMOND, Va.)— The first death in Virginia associated with the new influenza A (H1N1) virus, also called swine flu, was announced today by State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA.

The patient was an adult female from the Chesapeake Health District. Although the cause of death has not been confirmed, the H1N1 virus appears to have been a factor. Prior to today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 17 deaths in the nation caused by the new virus. There have been 115 deaths in laboratory-confirmed H1N1 cases worldwide.

“We are deeply saddened by this death and offer our condolences to the family,” Dr. Remley said. “The impact of this death is not lessened by the fact that the patient had preexisting medical conditions that increased the risk of complications from influenza.”

Unfortunately, Dr. Remley added, a death associated with the new virus was not unexpected, given the history of influenza-related deaths. Each year, seasonal flu results in about 36,000 deaths nationwide and approximately 1,000 die in Virginia each year from influenza and pneumonia.

“The Southeastern Virginia Training Center, where this person was a resident, has done an outstanding job in its response to this case. The quick action of the facility’s staff in obtaining medical care for the patient and its infection control measures has been exceptional,” Dr. Remley said.

“Our local health department, led by Dr. Nancy Welch, worked closely with the Training Center in protecting the health of all residents and staff, and in providing quality care. In addition, the health department, private medical community, and others have ensured that all high-risk contacts of this case have been appropriately treated,” she said. The Training Center is one of 16 facilities operated by the state’s Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.

The Commissioner said that all Virginians need to be vigilant in guarding against the flu and its spread. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches, chills or fatigue. People who experience these symptoms are asked to call their health care provider or local health department to discuss the possible need for treatment.

People also are advised to protect their health against influenza and other infectious diseases by:

- Staying home from work or school when ill and limiting their contact with others to keep from infecting them
- Calling their health care providers or their health department *before* seeking care for influenza-like illness so that the necessary infection control measures can be put in place
- Covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue in the trash after use
- Washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- Limiting close contact with sick people
- Preventing the spread of germs by not touching eyes, nose or mouth

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