

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FIRST SHIPMENTS OF NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA VACCINE ON THE WAY**

*Initial doses aimed at vaccinating health care and emergency medical services workers*

(RICHMOND, Va.) — State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA has announced that the first shipments of novel H1N1 influenza vaccine are on the way to Virginia. The first “routine” shipment of novel H1N1 vaccine to Virginia is being preceded by a small shipment, expected to arrive within the next week, that will allow the vaccination of individuals in the priority categories to begin, and will also allow the Virginia Department of Health to validate both the national and state-level distribution systems.

“We strongly encourage everyone to consider getting the H1N1 vaccine when it is widely available because H1N1 influenza remains a serious public health concern,” Commissioner Remley said, noting that vaccination is voluntary.

The first doses will primarily be used to vaccinate health care and emergency medical services workers. This helps protect patients by assuring that enough health care and emergency medical service workers are able to take care of patients and by decreasing the risk of the spread of this new flu strain to the vulnerable ill.

“The great news is this is only the beginning. We anticipate hearing in the next couple of days that there will be more vaccine that the Department of Health can order and supplies should rapidly increase over the following weeks,” Commissioner Remley said.

Virginia will initially receive a total of 43,500 doses of live, attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV). Of this, 30,200 doses are being shipped to hospitals and 13,300 doses to local health departments throughout the state. LAIV is a form of the vaccine that contains a live, but weakened, form of the novel H1N1 influenza virus. It is given as a “nasal mist” with a tiny quantity administered in each nostril, and is approved for the vaccination of healthy people ages 2 to 49. It is not approved for use in pregnant women.

Additional doses of novel H1N1 vaccine will continue to arrive over the coming weeks and will include other forms, such as an injectable vaccine, that is not limited to the groups eligible to receive LAIV.

For more information on the novel H1N1 flu virus, go online to the Virginia Department of Health at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov> or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov>. Information for the public is also available from the VDH Inquiry Center at [PHIC@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:PHIC@vdh.virginia.gov) and toll free weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1-877-ASK-VDH3.

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