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**Virginia Health Commissioner Kicks Off
H1N1 Vaccination Program**

*Dr. Karen Remley also previews Commonwealth's statewide
media campaign encouraging vaccinations*

Richmond, Va., October 15, 2009 – The Virginia Department of Health today kicked off its statewide media campaign and vaccination program for the H1N1 flu virus, vaccinating several members of the designated priority groups and unveiling a broad public awareness program designed to encourage Virginians to get vaccinated against the potentially lethal strain of flu.

Dr. Karen Remley, Virginia's health commissioner, received one of the first vaccines at an event at Virginia Commonwealth University's medical campus. Dr. Remley, who has asthma, fits into one of the priority group categories –an adult with a chronic, underlying health condition.

Vaccinations also were provided at the event to a nurse, an emergency medical technician, a pregnant woman, a first grade student and her mother, and an adult with a chronic heart condition – all representing the priority groups that health officials have asked to receive the first batch of the vaccine.

“The first doses of the vaccine are now available in Virginia,” Dr. Remley said. “However, while we are confident that we will have a sufficient amount for every Virginian who wants a vaccine to get one, we are asking those in the priority groups to be first in line to get protected against this highly contagious flu strain.”

Dr. Remley and the Virginia Department of Health are strongly encouraging all Virginians to get vaccinated against the H1N1 flu. She noted that the vaccine is extremely safe, with the risks associated with the flu itself far outweighing any potential risks related to the vaccine. She said that broader availability of the vaccine is expected in November.

As part of its campaign to urge citizens to get the vaccination, VDH today previewed components of its media campaign, which will include public service television and radio spots, transit, Internet-based and cinema advertising. The campaign carries the theme “H1N1Get1. It’s up to you to fight the flu.”

A special Web site, www.H1N1Get1.com also has been set up to provide up-to-date information about the virus and the places where vaccinations are available throughout the Commonwealth. Information also is available by calling 1.877.ASK.VDH3.

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