

Delaware General Health District

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NEWS RELEASE

HEALTH DISTRICT, EMERGENCY SERVICES CONFER ON FLU OUTBREAK

P.O. Box 570 1-3 W. Winter St. Delaware OH 43015
740-368-1700 FAX 740-368-1736 Web Site: www.delawarehealth.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information contact Jesse Carter, public information officer, at 740-203-2085.

DELAWARE, Oh., May 8, 2009 – The Delaware General Health District H₁N₁ Influenza Outbreak Incident Command Team updated leaders of local emergency services Friday on the status of the outbreak and possible scenarios for protecting local residents in the coming months.

Those scenarios include the possible need for two or three rounds of flu immunization clinics later this year. Health District Personal Health Director Joan Bowe R.N. announced that the H₁N₁ Influenza vaccine now under development might need to be administered separately from seasonal flu immunizations. The H₁N₁ Influenza vaccine might also require two shots administered at different times to assure protection against the novel H₁N₁ virus that has spread around the world in recent weeks. It remains unknown at this time whether an H₁N₁ Influenza vaccine can be made and distributed in advance of next winter's flu season.

The Health and Emergency Services leaders also discussed possible distribution of medicine and/or supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile. Delaware County Emergency Management Agency Director Brian Galligher called for an exercise “on a grand scale” to prepare for such a possibility.

The good news, Health Commissioner Frances M. Veverka said, is that the H₁N₁ Influenza has not spread as easily or been as severe as many experts feared. “We will be watching the Southern Hemisphere to see what happens during their flu season. Locally, we are reviewing how the disease progresses through the summer before response or immunization

plans can be finalized. Meanwhile, local partners can plan for different scenarios and be prepared by fall,” Veverka said.

Because the H₁N₁ Influenza hospitalization and death rates have not been as severe as feared earlier, the Health District is scaling back its response. E-mail updates to community leaders that have been daily will be weekly starting next week.

For additional information on H₁N₁ Influenza, log on to www.delawarehealth.org or phone the Health District Information Line at 740-203-2015.

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