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Humboldt County's First COVID-19 Vaccine Shipment Arrives

Humboldt County Public Health received its first shipment of 975 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine this morning. Due to ultra-low temperature storage requirements, these initial vaccine doses are being stored in a specialized freezer purchased by St. Joseph Hospital to meet the unique storage requirements of Pfizer's vaccine. Public Health will work with health care providers in the next few days to distribute the first doses of the vaccine consistent with state guidelines.

The national vaccination strategy developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention breaks vaccination planning down into three phases. Phase 1 vaccine distribution will focus on priority and high-risk populations, while vaccine doses are scarce. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is expected to provide additional information about distribution in Phases 2 and 3.

According to the CDPH Allocation Guide for COVID-19 Vaccine, California will prioritize the following groups for vaccination:

- "Persons at risk of exposure to ... COVID-19 through their work in any role in direct health care or long-term care settings. This includes persons at direct risk of exposure in their non-clinical roles, including but not limited to environmental services, patient transport or interpretation.
- "Residents of skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and similar long-term care settings for older or medically vulnerable individuals."

Humboldt County Public Health will be working with partners to allocate and distribute vaccine to priority health care populations consistent with these state guidelines. Meanwhile, the federal government has also partnered directly with pharmacies nationwide, including CVS and Walgreens, to distribute vaccine to residents and staff at long-term care facilities. This program is expected to roll out next week.

"We are very excited to have received the first batch of Humboldt County's vaccines this morning at Saint Joseph's Hospital," said Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Ian Hoffman. "As we know, there are not nearly enough doses to go around. We will be following state guidance and

vaccinating the highest risk people first, which includes all hospital staff, emergency medical services and long-term care facility residents and staff.”

Following this first vaccine shipment, Public Health is anticipating a second shipment of Pfizer vaccines as early as next week and expects Moderna vaccines to follow, pending Emergency Use Authorization by the Food and Drug Administration.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two doses to achieve full effect. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be administered three weeks after the first.

“This is an important first step towards getting COVID-19 under control,” said Dr. Roberta Luskin-Hawk, chief executive, St. Joseph Health, Humboldt County. “We are excited to partner with the County and store the Pfizer vaccine for Humboldt County. We look forward to offering the vaccine initially to the highest risk members of our health care team who have stepped up to care for our community during this pandemic. We will continue to offer the vaccine in accordance with guidance from public health officials.”

For up-to-date vaccine-related information, visit <https://humboldt.gov/2872/Vaccine-Info>.

For updates on vaccination distribution in California, go to cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx.

Humboldt County COVID-19 Data Dashboard: humboldt.gov/dashboard,
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