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Message from Pamela Rice Walker **Interim Director of Health**

Novel H1N1 Flu Update To St. Louis City Employees

As the 2009/10 seasonal flu season approaches, stories about novel H1N1 (swine) flu have begun to dominate the national and international news. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

The City of St. Louis Department of Health is encouraging City employees and other residents to follow the 6 steps below to assist in reducing the spread and negative impact of flu-like illnesses.

- Get seasonal flu vaccination as soon as possible.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue, is not available use your elbow or shoulder not your hand.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based hand cleaners are also effective hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

Public health officials are strongly encouraging parents with school age children to keep students at home if they have flu-like symptoms. This practice will assist in reducing the spread of flu viruses.

Finally, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the novel H1N1 flu vaccine when it first becomes available. These key populations include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Although a shortage of vaccine is not expected, its availability and demand is unpredictable. There is a possibility that initially the vaccine will be available in limited quantities. If this is the case, the committee recommended that the following groups receive the vaccine before others: children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions, children 6 months through 4 years of age, pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age and health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact.

Watch for additional updates on Call Central or visit the [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](http://www.flu.gov) website at www.flu.gov