COVID-19 Vaccine Update: DPH Receives Ultra-Cold Storage Unit, Finalizes Recommendations on Initial Allocation

DOVER (Dec. 9, 2020) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) announced that the shipment of an ultra-cold storage unit arrived at the DPH warehouse on Tuesday, Dec. 8. The storage unit will be used to safely store Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which requires controlled storage at an ultra-cold temperature of -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit).

The State could begin receiving initial doses of vaccine as early as next week if the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine receives emergency use authorization in the coming days.

The Thermo Scientific Revco ultra-cold storage unit from Fisher Scientific has the capacity to hold nearly 300,000 doses of vaccine. This unit will allow storage of the Pfizer vaccine without the need for dry ice exchange, giving additional flexibility for vaccine distribution within the state.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccine with ultra-cold storage requirements will be shipped directly from the manufacturer in sealed coolers that are packed with dry ice.

Vaccine providers can reference the CDC Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit that has been updated with a COVID-19 Vaccine Addendum. The addendum provides information, recommendations, and resources to assist COVID-19 vaccination providers in properly storing and handling COVID-19 vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/toolkit/index.html

Also on Tuesday, the State's Ethics Advisory Group met to consider the Division of Public Health's most recent recommendations regarding which specific groups should receive the vaccine as part of the first phase of distribution in Delaware. DPH makes its recommendations based on the goals of reducing death and hospitalization from COVID-19, protecting critical health services provided by hospitals and other medical staff, while also reducing the burden of disease on those who face disparities.

Phase 1A of the state's distribution plan, as approved by the Ethics Advisory Group and finalized by DPH, include residents of long-term care facilities and high-risk workers with routine exposure to infected individuals or materials in health or patient care settings. This includes the following:

- Hospital staff
- Emergency Medical Service providers who have direct patient contact
- Public Health staff who have direct patient contact
- Health care providers in outpatient settings
- Pharmacy staff
- Staff of long-term care facilities

DPH and the Ethics Advisory Group will continue to monitor recommendations from the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for further recommendations regarding subsequent phases. Additional details will be shared as decisions are finalized.

DPH has also posted the most updated version of its framework (or Playbook) for vaccine distribution on the de.gov/covidvaccine website, and added a section on Vaccine Safety.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For additional information about COVID-19 vaccine planning in Delaware, visit de.gov/covidvaccine. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.