Governor Carney, DPH Announce Arrival of Delaware's First Shipment of the COVID-19 Vaccine

DOVER (Dec. 14, 2020) – Governor John Carney and the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) announced today that Delaware has received its first shipment of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine Monday. Delaware, which pre-ordered its 8,775 doses of the Pfizer vaccine, is estimated to be one of the first states in the nation to receive it.

> *"The Pfizer vaccine's arrival is the first step in a process of getting back to our pre-pandemic normal," said* ***Governor John Carney****. "We are all looking forward to that. The vaccine will provide our front-line health care workers with the protection they need while caring for Delawareans who have contracted the virus. The vaccine's arrival does not mean we are in the clear. In fact, now more than ever, we need to step up our efforts to keep each other safe. That means wear a mask, wash your hands, and do not gather with your friends and family outside of your household. We know that's hard, particularly at this time of year, but we are almost through this. We just need to stand firm in our resolve to beat the virus."*

The first shipment of the Pfizer vaccine arrived at Bayhealth's Kent County location. DPH expects to receive the remainder of the vaccine doses on Wednesday. DPH will begin scheduling delivery to the remainder of the state's health systems upon receipt. If they are prepared, the hospitals can then begin vaccinating staff within 24 hours.

"We are proud to be among our nation's first health care leaders to receive the much-anticipated COVID-19 vaccine," said **Bayhealth President and CEO Terry M. Murphy, FACHE**. "The speed by which we were able to accept the vaccine is a testament to our drive to ensure our facilities are always safe, always open, and always ready. Our team members who are on the frontlines caring for COVID-19 patients will be among the first to receive the vaccine."

"We know that our frontline health care workers have been putting themselves directly in harm's way since March," said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. "We are encouraging all of them to get the vaccine when it is available. The Pfizer vaccine has been tested on 40,000 Americans, including people of color, in three clinical trials. The side effects are considered minor. The vaccine is the best protection we can offer health care workers to keep them safe at a critical time in this pandemic."

DPH has devised a three-tier strategy for distribution:

Phase 1a: Health care personnel, emergency medical services agencies, and long-term care staff and residents will receive the vaccine first.

Remainder of Phase 1: In early 2021, those who work in high-risk and critical infrastructure industries such as food processing, utilities, education, police and fire, those who work and live in congregate settings such as correctional facilities and homeless shelters, as well as those with certain underlying health conditions, and are aged 65 and older are likely to receive the vaccine.

Phase 2: (March 2021) Those with more moderate risk for getting COVID-19 are eligible for receiving the vaccine. More details about specific groups in this phase will be provided as we get closer.

Phase 3: (Spring/Summer 2021) The general public can expect to receive vaccines through their primary health care providers, health centers and pharmacies as the vaccine becomes more widely available.

While DPH does not plan to mandate the vaccine, it is strongly encouraging that people, particularly health care workers, get vaccinated once doses become available.

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was granted Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration Friday evening. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) also voted Saturday to recommend the use of the vaccine for individuals 16 and older under the emergency use authorization.

Children under the age of 16 are not included in the initial three phases of the vaccine's rollout, as the FDA has not yet approved its use for individuals who fall into this category. More clinical trials involving children under 16 are still needed.

The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is advising women who are breastfeeding, individuals who have experienced allergic reactions to other vaccines and those who have compromised immune systems should discuss the benefits and risks of taking the vaccine with their medical provider before receiving it.

The potential side effects from the vaccine are similar to those experienced by people who receive the flu shot: soreness at the injection site, fever, headaches, and body aches that usually go away within 24 hours. Unless symptoms worsen or linger, there is no need to seek medical care. Pfizer reported no serious side effects from the vaccine, and there were no deaths directly linked to the vaccine itself. The FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the COVID-19 vaccine for safety and effectiveness and any long-term or rare side effects.

The Pfizer vaccine has a 90 percent effectiveness rate. Comparatively, the flu vaccine is generally 40 to 60 percent effective. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain a live virus and cannot give individuals the coronavirus.

The Pfizer vaccine does require two doses spaced about three weeks a part to be effective. The same brand of vaccine must be administered for both doses. DPH plans to remind individuals to get their second dose of the vaccine by sending reminder letters, providing automated phone calls and text messages, and by patient record cards.

DPH is in the process of setting up a Vaccine Call Center, which it expects to be operational soon. Individuals can email their questions concerning the vaccine to Vaccine@Delaware.gov. Individuals can also visit de.gov/covidvaccine for up-to-date information. Myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/ will also have data soon on the vaccine available.