Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy Launches Middlesex County Megasite at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center in Edison

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EDISON – Gov. Phil Murphy bent down near North Brunswick resident Richard Satyavan for a photo, moments after cheers erupted for Satyavan, who received his COVID-19 vaccine at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center Friday morning.

“Boom, well done,” Murphy said.

Satyavan, 76, was one of three people the governor stopped to visit while touring the launch of the vaccine mega-site at the Raritan Center facility, where officials hope as many as 2,000 vaccines a day will be administered.

Vaikalathur Mani, 76, of Somerset, said as a diabetes and blood pressure patient, he’s at high risk for getting the virus.

“I want to make sure that the risk is taken care of,” Mani said, before receiving the vaccine. “Like a flu shot, I consider this to cure COVID-19.”

Murphy reported that as of Thursday, 300,00 vaccines have been administered statewide.

“This is my privilege to get vaccinated. I’m a senior belonging to a vulnerable group. By getting vaccinated myself, I’m helping my community so the younger people can go and work because they are not working because of us,” Satyavan said.

Murphy was joined at the mega-site by New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli, U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Middlesex County Board of Commissioners Director Ron Rios, state Sen. Sam Thompson, Assemblyman Rob Karabinchak and Edison Mayor Tom Lankey.

The Edison facility is one of six mega-sites statewide. The others are in Bergen, Morris, Gloucester, Burlington and Atlantic counties.

“This is a huge thing for Middlesex County and the region. It’s really going to help us in our efforts to eradicate this virus,” Rios said, adding the county is fortunate that the state with RWJBarnabas Health is able to do this.

“It’s scary, and I just wish people would take this more seriously and wear the mask and wash your hands and social distance and avoid going out,” Rios said.

After the tour, Murphy addressed backlash over smokers being given priority for vaccines over teachers and transportation workers under the latest state vaccination guidelines.

Murphy said more vaccines are being administered by the minute, but it’s still not as fast as he wants and there is still not enough supply from the federal government.

“We take some solace in the projections, in particular now that the [Joe] Biden team is making in terms of supplies out of the feds. So in the context of a big ongoing supply-demand imbalance, overwhelmingly due to not enough coming out of the feds, we’re following for the most part the CDC guidelines,” the governor said.

Murphy said if you are 65 years old or older, you are “up at bat,” and those under 65 with a chronic health condition also are eligible. Murphy said he didn’t come up with the list, but the CDC has smokers on it.

“I hope sooner than later teachers are on the on-deck circle,” he said.

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The governor said the COVID-19 fatalities in New Jersey are overwhelmingly in two categories – seniors and people with chronic health conditions.

“We’re trying to save the most vulnerable first,” he said.

Suzanne Russell

Staff Writer

mycentraljersey.com

Email: srussell@gannettnj.com (mailto:srussell@gannettnj.com)

VIDEO

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Biographies and headshots of the vaccine recipients can be found here (https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy/)

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