

Update on the 2009 H1N1 Flu Pandemic

February 9, 2010

The New Year has delivered good news in the reduced incidence, albeit potentially temporary, of H1N1 influenza in Ohio. Effective on February 8, 2010, the state of Ohio is demobilizing its H1N1 response plan. In the event of resurgence, the response plan may be reactivated.

As we enter this phase of the H1N1 response plan, there are several important factors that all of us need to remember.

- The H1N1 influenza has not been eradicated. Individuals continue to become infected with the H1N1 influenza virus, but not at the previous pandemic levels. The at-risk populations identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have not changed.
- Diligent hand washing, appropriate utilization of personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccination remain the best avenues to prevent the spread of H1N1 influenza. The H1N1 vaccine is readily available, and the supplies remain sufficient to meet the needs of the community. Vaccination of all individuals, including EMS providers, continues to be highly recommended.
- The declaration of emergency that affects public health issued by Governor Strickland on October 7, 2009 in response to the H1N1 influenza pandemic remains in effect. This declaration allows EMT-Paramedics and EMT-Intermediates certified in Ohio to administer the H1N1 influenza vaccine provided that they receive the appropriate training and are under physician medical direction. Despite the demobilization of Ohio's H1N1 response plan, EMS providers who are compliant with the declaration's requirements are permitted and encouraged to assist our public health agencies in the administration of the H1N1 influenza vaccine until this provision within the declaration is terminated by the governor or by the Executive Director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency.
- The resource materials addressing H1N1 influenza remain posted on the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS website at www.ems.ohio.gov. The information posted includes the *Vaccinations for Ohio EMS Personnel* training module, Governor Strickland's declaration of emergency, PPE guidance for H1N1 influenza, and links to federal and state organizations with whom we have partnered during this pandemic.

As we proceed into the demobilization phase, meetings have already been conducted, on both the federal and state levels, to critique the events during the H1N1 influenza response, identify "best practices", and make any necessary amendments in the disaster

plans or procedures to improve our nation's response to pandemics. You, as an Ohio EMS provider, have the most important voice of all. I welcome any comments or suggestions that you have regarding the H1N1 influenza vaccination training module, information resources, operations and procedures, and prehospital patient care during this pandemic. With your input, we hope to continue to improve our support of the Ohio EMS system during all of the challenges that you face now and in the future.

On behalf of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS, we thank you for your ongoing participation in the H1N1 influenza mass vaccination program and for your daily contributions to the health and safety of all of the citizens and visitors in Ohio. In light of the budget crises and manpower shortages that Ohio EMS agencies are currently experiencing, I am both impressed and proud to have witnessed the amazing fortitude of spirit and commitment of our Ohio EMS providers during this declared emergency. You are the best!

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