

News Release

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Contact: Sheri Bowen, cell-527-0137
sherib@mcph.us

President Signs H1N1 Emergency Declaration

Declaration provides additional response tool

President Barack Obama has signed a National Emergency Declaration for the ongoing H1N1 flu pandemic. What does this mean to residents of Mills?

“The emergency declaration does not mean the virus is becoming stronger or more deadly,” said Sheri Bowen, Agency Adm. of Mills Co. Public Health. “It’s also not because of vaccine supply issues. The declaration is simply a regulatory move that will make it easier for health care facilities to respond to the ongoing outbreak.”

The declaration will enable the U.S. government, when necessary and on a case-by-case basis, to waive certain rules in order to enable medical treatment facilities to best respond to any surge of patients because of the 2009 H1N1 virus. It gives states and the medical entities in those states the flexibility to appropriately respond to needs as they arise.

“This is a welcome move that gives us additional ability to prepare for the continued spread of H1N1,” said Bowen. “We know the virus is moving rapidly through the county and the state.”

As H1N1 vaccine continues to arrive in limited amounts in Mills County, it’s important to take personal action to protect yourself, your family and others from this virus. Remember the three Cs: Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow; Clean your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer; and Contain germs by staying home when ill. This last “C” is especially important to help stop the spread of influenza through schools. Children should stay home from school until they are fever-free, without the use of fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours. The Iowa Department of Public Health advises that if everyone would take these actions, about 50 percent of the transmission of this virus could be stopped.

Individuals in the following priority groups for vaccination are asked to contact Mills Co. Public Health to have their names added to our list. Those priority groups include pregnant women, caregivers and siblings of children less than 6 months of age, children 6 months – 4 years of age; children age 5-18 with chronic health problems such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, etc. They can contact us at 527-9699 or by email at debemeir@mcph.us. Approximately 250 individuals on the wait list have received H1N1 vaccinations so far and we will continue to schedule appointments as vaccine becomes available. In time, there will be adequate vaccine to provide public clinics to additional groups including all children ages 6 months through young adults age 24 and individuals age 25-64 with chronic health conditions.

A statewide toll-free hotline has been established for public questions about seasonal and H1N1 influenza at 1-800-447-1985. More information can also be found at www.idph.state.ia.us or at www.mcph.millscoia.us.

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