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Media Update

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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May 4 Media Update

Still no confirmed cases of H1N1 (swine flu) in Alaska

- **How many cases of H1N1 (swine flu) have been reported in Alaska?**

As of Monday, May 4 there are no probable or confirmed cases of H1N1 flu in Alaska. To date, no suspected H1N1 influenza samples have been sent to the CDC in Atlanta for testing.

- **How many courses of Tamiflu are available in Alaska?**

The role of antiviral medications in managing the H1N1 outbreak is currently unknown. The state already has approximately 100,000 courses of antiviral medication on hand as part of our ongoing pandemic preparedness efforts. Ten thousand additional courses have already been distributed to health-care facilities statewide. Antivirals along with masks and other medical supplies are being distributed as part of the state's readiness response plan. Shipments to health-care providers within the tribal health system are being arranged. Photos of the antiviral stockpile taken on May 1 are available on our Website at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/press/2009/stockpile.htm>

- **Has response to the outbreak changed?**

The State Department of Health and Social Services H1N1 response is now being organized under the Unified Command System being led by the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management at the State Emergency Coordination Center on the Fort Richardson Army Post. The SECC is activated at its third highest level and is fully staffed. Media can contact the SECC public information officer, Jeremy Zidek, at 428-7125. DHSS daily updates will continue until no longer needed.

- **When should I go to the doctor?** (information from the CDC)

Common symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, diarrhea, and vomiting. Nearly all people with flu will have at least two of these symptoms. The high risk groups for this new H1N1 flu are not known at this time but it's possible that they may be the same as for seasonal influenza.

You should stay home and avoid contact with other people, except to seek medical care. It is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care or antiviral medications.

If you have severe illness (such as difficulty breathing, inability to drink enough fluids, or a high fever that does not respond to treatment with over-the-counter medications) or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health-care provider or seek medical care. Your health-care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Be aware that if the flu becomes widespread, there will be little need to continue testing people, so your health-care provider may decide not to test for the flu virus.

Our primary messages remain:

Health officials recommend following the same advice given for preventing seasonal influenza:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue or inside your elbow. Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- **Stay home if you are sick.** If you have flu symptoms such as fever, body aches and cough, stay home from work or school and avoid public activities for at least five days (seven for children) to prevent spreading the disease to others.

DHSS will continue to update its Web site <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/> with state, national and international information about swine flu.

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