

Bill Hogan
Commissioner

P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601

www.hss.state.ak.us



Media Update

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Contact: Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032
gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov

UPDATE: State no longer to issue press releases on flu-related deaths

(Anchorage, AK) — The Department of Health and Social Services will no longer issue routine press releases for each influenza-related fatality. Decisions to issue press releases on flu-related deaths will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Flu-related hospitalizations and deaths will continue to be reported on the Section of Epidemiology's Influenza Surveillance Web page at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/influenza/influenza.jsp>. The page is updated every Wednesday.

Two flu-related deaths involving adult women from Fairbanks occurred on Sept. 24 and will be added to the page on Wednesday. Both women had pre-existing medical conditions and were hospitalized prior to their deaths, and both had laboratory-confirmation of influenza A infection.

"Our thoughts are with the families and friends of these women," said Dr. Ward Hurlburt, director of Public Health. "This is another sad reminder of the potential severity of influenza infection, especially in persons with underlying medical conditions."

State officials are urging all Alaskans who are eligible to receive influenza vaccine, both seasonal and H1N1, to get vaccinated. In addition, people with pre-existing health conditions should contact their health-care providers if they develop symptoms of the flu. Healthy people can usually treat their symptoms at home, but they should also contact their providers if their symptoms are severe.

For more information on 2009 H1N1 go to: <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/>.

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