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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY TO BEGIN H1N1 FLU VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Westchester County will begin distributing its first shipment of H1N1 vaccine this week to emergency service agencies for vaccination of EMS workers who provide direct patient care.

The county's Department of Emergency Services notified the medical directors of emergency medical services agencies today of the vaccine's availability and will provide 1,000 doses to agencies whose medical directors request it.

The vaccine the county received is in the form of FluMist, a nasal spray which can be given to non-pregnant people ages 2 to 49 who are in good health and do not have asthma or other upper respiratory conditions.

The county estimates there are 3,000 emergency medical service workers in Westchester who provide patient care. This includes paramedics, emergency medical technicians and volunteers. So far, an estimated 1,000 of these workers have indicated, via a survey from the county, they are eligible and interested in getting the vaccine.

Along with other health departments, hospitals and large institutions, Westchester County's health department received its first shipment of 1,000 doses of the H1N1 vaccine on Tuesday from the state Department of Health. The county expects its next shipment sometime next week. More supplies will be shipped in the coming weeks and months, both to these institutions and to other providers who have registered with New York State to receive the vaccine for their patients.

"There will be more than enough vaccine for everyone in the priority groups," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health. "Residents are encouraged to be patient, as supplies have not yet begun to trickle in to doctors' offices in Westchester. If you are not among the priority groups, please practice good hand hygiene, get your regular flu shot if your doctor advises, and cough into your sleeve if needed."

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“Emergency workers are among those on the front lines in dealing with the sickest patients, which is why we hope to get these workers the vaccine promptly,” said Commissioner of Emergency Services Anthony Sutton.

Emergency medical workers are among the five priority groups designated by the federal government to receive the vaccine first. The others are:

- Pregnant women.
- Healthcare workers.
- Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years old.
- People 25 to 64 with chronic health conditions such as asthma and diabetes.
- People who live with or care for infants under 6 months old.