

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rick Perry

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News Release

Gov. Perry, State Officials: Texas is Prepared for H1N1 Flu Season

Encourages Texans to take precautions

SAN ANTONIO – Gov. Rick Perry today, along with Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Commissioner David Lakey, Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott and Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples, highlighted the state's preparedness efforts in advance of the anticipated H1N1 flu season.

“Texas’ effort to deal with the H1N1 virus is robust and we are more prepared than ever to handle the challenge with more anti-viral medication in stock, more state and local coordination and more science to battle H1N1,” Gov. Perry said. “With the new school year beginning in most communities today, it’s a good time to remind Texans that frequent hand-washing, good hygiene and staying home if you’re sick can fight the spread of the H1N1 flu virus.”

As a proactive measure, in a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today, Gov. Perry requested the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide an additional 25 percent, which is approximately 800,000 courses, of Texas’ allotment of antiviral medications from the Strategic National Stockpile. He also sent a letter to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano requesting that the federal government allow a pandemic to be eligible for a major disaster declaration.

Texas currently has 2.5 million courses of antiviral medication prepositioned in the state, including the state’s previous 25 percent allotment from the Strategic National Stockpile and an additional 805,000 courses purchased

with funding from the 81st Legislature.

“Although this flu season will be a challenge, it can be effectively managed. The good news is that, although this virus has rapidly spread worldwide, it has not changed and has not become more severe,” Lakey said. “We must remain vigilant and take personal precautions such as covering our cough, washing our hands, staying home when ill and getting vaccinated for the flu.”

To prepare for the upcoming flu season the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management (GDEM) and DSHS co-hosted an H1N1 summit earlier this month, regional summits across the state, and a statewide conference call with state, regional and local leadership.

GDEM has been working with DSHS, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Department of Agriculture to provide guidance to local school districts and health departments and the state will also provide H1N1 guidance letters to all school administrators.

“The health and safety of our students is paramount,” Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott said. “TEA will continue to provide information and support to districts as they prepare and coordinate with their local communities in advance of the upcoming flu season.”

The Department of Agriculture and TEA have developed a plan for the continued distribution and access to free and reduced lunches for children should schools close (Currently, 2.1 million school children participate).

“We are committed to protecting students from illnesses and ensuring nutritious meal services continue,” Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples said. “Millions of Texas children depend on the meals served at school every day, and we want to make sure schools have the option of continuing this crucial service, while still protecting those students from any public health threat.”

Health officials say everyone should follow standard precautions to reduce the spread of any respiratory illness.

- Stay home when you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

The CDC estimates the H1N1 vaccine will be available by mid-October and in Texas the distribution will be managed by DSHS. It is estimated that 45 million doses will be available nationwide.

Groups targeted for the vaccine will include pregnant women, household contacts and caregivers for children younger than six months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, all persons six months through 24 years of age and persons 25 years through 64 years of age who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

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