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KDHE announces additional death of Kansan infected with the 2009 H1N1 influenza A virus

A 52 year-old man from southwest Kansas* has died from infection with the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) announced today. This death brings the total number of confirmed deaths from the pandemic strain statewide to 26.

The man's infection was confirmed in the KDHE laboratory on December 10, and his death was reported to KDHE on January 7. The man did not have any underlying health conditions that placed him at greater risk for severe complications of influenza.

KDHE Secretary Roderick Bremby and Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, Kansas State Health Officer, expressed sympathy and offered their deepest condolences to the family.

"Even healthy individuals can succumb to pandemic H1N1 flu," said Dr. Eberhart-Phillips. "Getting vaccinated should remain a priority if you have not yet done so, even if you have no chronic health conditions that would increase your risk of flu complications."

The pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine is being distributed to public health departments, health care providers and retail pharmacies across the state. Up-to-date information on H1N1 vaccination clinics being held across the state can be found by going to www.kdheks.gov and clicking on "Where can I receive the H1N1vaccine?"

It is important to note that the number of deaths confirmed to be caused by pandemic H1N1 influenza under-represents the true number of deaths. The great majority of all influenza or pneumonia-related deaths that occur (pneumonia is the most common severe complication of influenza) do not have a confirmatory lab result associated with them. For more information on mortality due to influenza-like illness in Kansas, please review KDHE's Epidemiology and Surveillance Weekly Status Report available at http://www.kdheks.gov/H1N1/H1N1_Epi_Reports.htm.

The symptoms of infection with the pandemic H1N1 virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever of 100 degrees or greater, body aches, coughing, sore throat, respiratory congestion, and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting. Most people who have been ill with pandemic H1N1 influenza have recovered without medical treatment.

However, some people develop serious complications that require hospitalization or may lead to death. Although serious complications are more likely among persons with certain underlying chronic health conditions, this pandemic influenza virus has caused serious complications and deaths among persons without such factors. Unlike typical seasonal influenza, the 2009 H1N1 virus is causing a greater disease

burden among adolescents and young adults. Severe illness from H1N1 virus infection can even occur among relatively young, healthy persons.

Most children and adults with the flu who are generally in good health will recover without needing to visit a health care provider. Some people may want to call their health care provider for advice on how to care for the flu at home. When planning to visit hospitalized patients, people should first call the health care facility to ask about any restrictions on visitation. Some hospitals and other health care facilities have put additional restrictions in place to reduce the risk of spreading the 2009 H1N1 virus.

Individuals who experience severe illness or who are at high risk of complications from H1N1 influenza infection, including children less than 5 years of age, adults 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, and persons with chronic medical conditions (including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions), should contact their health care provider.

Until people are able to be vaccinated against the virus, individuals are encouraged to take the following steps to reduce its spread:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you become sick, stay home until at least 24 hours after fever or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, in order to avoid spreading illness to co-workers and friends.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues. If you do not have a tissue, cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow and not your hands.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.

KDHE has established a phone number for concerned Kansans to call with questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza A virus. The toll-free number is **1-877-427-7317**. Operators will be available to answer questions from **8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday**. Persons calling will be directed to press “1” on their touch-tone phone to be directed to an operator who can answer questions.

Kansans with questions about the virus can email H1N1fluinfo@kdheks.gov. Information is also available from KDHE at www.kdheks.gov.

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***Note to Editors/Reporters:** The geographic area stated in this release is defined as follows:

- **Southwest Kansas:** Greely, Wichita, Scott, Lane, Hamilton, Kearny, Finney, Hodgeman, Stanton, Grant, Haskell, Gray, Ford, Morton, Stevens, Seward, Meade and Clark counties

In order to balance KDHE’s statutory requirements to not personally identify an individual and the need to share important public health information, KDHE is releasing the region or major metropolitan area of residence, the individual’s age, sex, and the presence of any underlying health conditions for pandemic influenza-related deaths. This new policy is currently under review and may be changed if necessary.

As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans.

Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.