



Office of Public Health

H1N1 Influenza, September 11, 2009

H1N1 Influenza Vaccine: Guidance for NPS Employees and Parks

Background: Vaccine against the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus is expected to be available in the United States by mid-October 2009. Because the initial supply of vaccine may be limited, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that the vaccine be initially reserved for 5 target groups who are at higher risk for influenza or influenza-related complications:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and providers of infants aged <6 months
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- Persons aged 6 months–24 years
- Persons aged 25–64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications

If vaccine supply is not adequate to meet demand for vaccination among these 5 target groups, the CDC recommends that a subset of these target groups receive priority for vaccination until vaccine availability increases.

(See http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination_qa_pub.htm for more details).

What NPS employees should know about the H1N1 vaccine

1. Stay informed. Vaccine production is unpredictable, and CDC recommendations may change. For the most up-to-date information, please see the above CDC link.
2. H1N1 vaccine will not be distributed through the Department of the Interior or through the National Park Service. H1N1 vaccine delivery will primarily be coordinated with state health departments who will arrange for vaccine to be delivered to local health departments and/or healthcare providers.
3. In late September, refer to your county/local health department website for places where you can receive the H1N1 vaccine. Depending on the jurisdiction, H1N1 vaccine might be available at health departments, mass-vaccination clinics, primary care providers, hospitals, pharmacies, schools, and in workplace settings.
4. At large NPS units/offices that have their own healthcare facilities or occupational health clinics, H1N1 vaccine might be available at the workplace. Most NPS employees, however, will likely receive vaccination outside of the workplace.
5. If you or your family members are not in one of the 5 target groups, you are still eligible to receive vaccine once demand for vaccination among the target groups has been met. The next priority groups for vaccination are:
 - a. All persons 25–64 years
 - b. All persons ≥65 years (only if vaccine demand is met among younger age groups)
6. H1N1 vaccine is considered a federal asset, and there will be no charge for the vaccine itself. Healthcare providers, however, may assess a charge to administer the vaccine.

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7. Seasonal influenza vaccine will still be offered this year but will not likely provide protection against H1N1 influenza. The seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for most people. See the following CDC link for more details (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>).

Additional guidance for NPS managers

1. Park managers and supervisors should be flexible with leave policies to allow employees and their family members to get the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines when they are available.
2. If multiple employees and/or visitors develop respiratory symptoms, contact your local health department and the NPS Office of Public Health for further guidance.
3. Continue to emphasize the everyday steps all employees and visitors can take to prevent influenza transmission:
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.