



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD
DIRECTOR

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Hawai'i Department of Health and City & County of Honolulu conduct training exercise for vaccine distribution *Counties prepare for vaccinating Phase 1 priority groups*

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) and City and County of Honolulu today conducted a vaccination distribution exercise to simulate standing up vaccine clinics to immunize first responders and essential workers in the Phase 1 priority group which includes essential healthcare workers, long-term care facility residents and staff, and first responders. The City and County of Honolulu's exercise is the first of a number of drills planned statewide in every county to prepare to safely and efficiently administer the vaccine.

"The state has been conducting medical countermeasure distribution exercises and vaccination clinics for years, and our training and planning with public and private stakeholders is making a huge difference," said Judy Kern, chief of the DOH Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness. "We greatly appreciate the City and County of Honolulu, Counties of Hawai'i, Maui and Kaua'i for their strong commitment to ensuring our first responders and other essential workers have access to the vaccine in a convenient and organized manner."

"While hospitals and healthcare facilities are focused on vaccinating their workers and may act as community hubs for various phases of the state vaccination plan, the City is working with DOH to ensure we are taking care of our first responders," said Hiro Toiya, director of the City and County of Honolulu Department of Emergency Management. "We are doing all we can to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is available to those at highest risk as we prepare for the first phase of the vaccination plan for Oahu."

While there is no plan to mandate the vaccine, the DOH is strongly encouraging that people, particularly essential healthcare workers, to get vaccinated once doses are available.

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was granted Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration on Friday, Dec. 11. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) also voted Saturday to recommend the use of the vaccine for individuals 16 and older under the emergency use authorization.

Children under the age of 16 are not included in the initial three phases of the vaccine's rollout, as the FDA has not yet approved its use for individuals who fall into this category. More clinical trials involving children under 16 are still needed.

The FDA and the CDC are advising women who are breastfeeding, individuals who have experienced allergic reactions to other vaccines and those who have compromised immune systems should discuss the benefits and risks of taking the vaccine with their medical provider before receiving it.

The potential side effects from the vaccine are similar to those experienced by people who receive the flu shot: soreness at the injection site, fever, headaches, and body aches that usually go away within 24 hours. Unless symptoms worsen or linger, there is no need to seek medical care. Pfizer reported no serious side effects from the vaccine, and there were no deaths directly linked to the vaccine itself. The FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the COVID-19 vaccine for safety and effectiveness and any long-term or rare side effects.

Training exercises are being conducted throughout the state this week at undisclosed locations to run through operational plans and ensure smooth and efficient distribution of the COVID-19 vaccination. For video and photos of today's exercise on Oahu use the following links.

Photos: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5dj05hlu7uwfpkb/AACfO78WNmAU9Fredf2uqm7-a?dl=0>

Video: <https://vimeo.com/490978925>

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