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SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY EXPERIENCING INCREASED INFLUENZA ACTIVITY *IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO TAKE ACTIONS TO FIGHT THE FLU*

STOCKTON (January 8, 2014) – Every year, influenza spreads across the country, from person to person, among families and communities. The severity of flu illness can vary from mild to severe. Flu-related complications can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death.

Since the start of this year's flu season San Joaquin County Public Health Services (PHS) has received reports of eight (8) people with severe, laboratory confirmed influenza who were hospitalized in Intensive Care Units (ICU). Of these there was 1 death. All of these cases, except for one, have been reported since December 29, 2013. The predominant influenza strain in these cases is Influenza A (pH1N1).

As influenza (flu) activity continues to increase in San Joaquin County, Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Furst encourages residents to "**TAKE 3 ACTIONS**" to fight the flu:

#1. Take time to get the current seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine

- CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal influenza viruses. Since it takes up to two weeks after vaccination for full immunity to take effect; anyone who has not already been vaccinated should do so NOW. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine as soon as possible.
- Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of serious flu complications, including young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
- Seasonal flu vaccine is also important for health care workers, child care workers and other people who live with or care for high risk people to prevent giving the flu to those at high risk.
- Flu vaccinations are still available at a wide variety of places, including doctors' offices, local health department clinics, and community settings as well as in most retail pharmacies. To find a flu vaccine location near you, visit www.healthmap.org/flushot. With many forms of the influenza vaccine now available, check with your healthcare provider to decide which is the best option for you.

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- At the PHS clinics in Lodi, Manteca and Stockton, influenza vaccine is available during regular Immunization hours for \$16; but no one will be denied services for inability to pay. For more information on PHS Clinic schedules, visit the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website at www.sjcphs.org or call 1-800-839-4949.

#2. Take everyday preventive actions to stop germs

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough and sneeze. Otherwise cough or sneeze into your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.
- 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. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

#3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them

- If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can treat your illness.
- Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
- Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia.
- It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat people who are very sick with the flu (for example, people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with the flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications, either because of their age or because they have a high risk medical condition.

The symptoms of influenza, which tend to come on suddenly, may include fever (usually high), chills, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting. People experiencing flu-like symptoms should call their health care provider if they have severe symptoms, trouble breathing, are pregnant, or have underlying medical conditions such as asthma, chronic disease, or developmental difficulties.

For more information about seasonal influenza visit the websites below:

- San Joaquin County Public Health Services, www.sjcphs.org
- California Department of Public Health, www.cdph.ca.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>
- Flu.gov, www.flu.gov

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