



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **HHSA TO TEST EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AT MASS VACCINATION** *Free Flu Shots Offered to First 1,000 Volunteers; It's Still Not Too Late for Shots*

The County of San Diego HHSA (Health and Human Services Agency) Emergency Medical Services is offering 1,000 people a flu shot while helping the Agency practice its response to a health emergency.

A mass vaccination exercise featuring free flu shots for the public will take place **Wednesday, Nov. 28 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the San Marcos Civic Center (1 Civic Center Drive, San Marcos, CA 92069)**. This event is a joint effort between HHSA's Emergency Medical Services, Immunization Branch, North Regions, and the City of San Marcos. **Only the first 1,000 volunteers will receive a free flu shot.**

Volunteers in the Points of Dispensing (POD) exercise will be directed through a series of stations and given a free flu shot. By donating their time, volunteers can help Emergency Medical Services test its emergency response capabilities, which will benefit the entire community. The mass vaccination is one of a series of exercises that will help the County practice executing its public health preparedness plan.

"The recent wildfires have shown that developing disaster preparedness plans and practicing them on a regular basis, as we do, helps us to better respond during a disaster," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County of San Diego Public Health Officer.

Since the flu season is currently underway, the exercise also gives the public an opportunity to protect their health and the health of those around them by getting a flu shot.

"The flu often peaks in February, so it's not too late to get a flu shot in December or even January," Dr. Wooten added.

Each year influenza-related complications are responsible for 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations. This season, with an expected 132 million doses of influenza vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that anyone wanting to reduce their risk of getting influenza or transmitting it to others receive flu vaccine. High risk adult groups —adults age 50 and older, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic diseases, including asthma—are strongly recommended to receive an influenza vaccine,

Local health departments around the nation are organizing POD exercises to test their preparedness plans and give staff and volunteers ongoing practice in executing those plans.

For more information about the exercise, contact the HHSA Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661.

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