

Smallpox Vaccine Shipment Briefing Points

January 29, 2003

- As had been widely expected, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson made an official “Declaration Regarding Administration of Smallpox Countermeasures” on Friday, January 24, 2003.
- This declaration by the HHS Secretary had to be made before the liability protection afforded under the federal Homeland Security Act can go into effect.
- It is important for individuals to realize that the Secretary’s declaration does not indicate that there is information to suggest an imminent smallpox threat. This is simply a continuation of preparedness efforts throughout the country.
- Michigan has officially requested its supply of smallpox vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and received that shipment on January 29. However, there is not a scheduled date as to when we will begin administering the vaccine to certain public health and health care providers.
- States are **not** required to immediately begin vaccination programs upon receipt of the vaccine.
- Michigan will continue to aggressively work with our local and regional partners in our preparedness efforts to ensure the safety and security of the smallpox vaccination program. These efforts include vaccination training, communication, and data management.
- At the same time, Michigan will continue to work with the Department of Health and Human Services, the CDC and national associations to resolve some outstanding issues regarding compensation for the rare injuries related to smallpox vaccination.
- Michigan’s local health departments, hospitals and medical control authorities are crucial partners in preparedness efforts to deal with smallpox and other threats
- Michigan's smallpox preparedness plans include the creation of vaccinated teams across the state. Each of the eight regions, into which Michigan has been organized, will have at least one smallpox public health response team and two hospital-based smallpox health care teams, for a total of approximately 30 smallpox health care teams across the state.
- Should there be an actual case or cases of smallpox identified, these teams will be mobilized to vaccinate and follow-up with persons exposed, and to care for those with smallpox.
- We have had a great deal of interest and willingness from the health care community to participate in our efforts to protect the citizens of Michigan from the threat of smallpox. We are confident this will continue, and even increase to include more partners, as the injury compensation issues are resolved at the federal level.

- The first group of individuals considered for voluntary pre-event smallpox vaccination would include the vaccinators themselves, smallpox public health response teams, and smallpox health care teams at designated hospitals. Between 5,000 and 7,000 people in Michigan could be vaccinated as part of this stage of preparedness for smallpox.
- After these initial vaccinations are successfully completed, emergency responders – including police officers and firefighters – and additional health care workers may be offered smallpox vaccination.
- The federal government has announced no plans to inoculate the general public at this time, and currently recommends against it.
- Smallpox vaccination is an entirely voluntary decision.
- The smallpox vaccine is very effective at preventing disease, however, it does have some significant risks. Out of every one million people vaccinated in the past, one or two died as a result of serious adverse reactions to the vaccine, while up to 50 others had life-threatening illness.
- In the absence of actual smallpox disease, careful screening of potential vaccine recipients is essential to ensure that those at increased risk for adverse reactions do not receive the vaccine.
- Individuals who should NOT be vaccinated as a pre-event measure include expectant mothers; people with eczema or atopic dermatitis, or a history of either; people being treated for cancer; people who are HIV-positive; people who have had an organ transplant; and those who live with someone with any of these conditions.
- Other individuals who should not receive the smallpox vaccine in the absence of exposure to actual smallpox disease include people who are allergic to the vaccine or any of its ingredients; people who have a moderate or severe short-term illness; and anyone who is less than 18 years of age.
- In advance of receiving the smallpox vaccine, all individuals will have received the Smallpox Pre-Vaccination Information Packet, for their thorough review. The Smallpox Pre-Vaccination Information Packet is available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov and by clicking on “Smallpox.”
- Additional information on smallpox and smallpox vaccine can also be found on the Michigan Department of Community Health website at www.michigan.gov/mdch and by clicking on “Smallpox.”