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H1N1 (SWINE FLU) UPDATE OKALOOSA COUNTY

OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL— The county's first death due to H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus has been confirmed in a 33-year-old female with underlying medical conditions. The Health Department Director, Dr. Karen Chapman, M.D. said, "Our sympathies go out to this individual's family and friends. My hope for her family and friends is that happier memories of times shared with their loved one will carry them through this sorrowful time."

Dr. Chapman encourages everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of influenza, know what to do if you are sick, and know the emergency warning signs of a severe flu infection.

Some common symptoms of influenza include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and in the case of the H1N1 virus, diarrhea and vomiting. If you think you have influenza, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. Call your doctor and ask whether you need to be seen in the office, emergency department or to stay home.

Most people with 2009 H1N1 have had mild illness and have not needed medical care or antiviral drugs, and the same is true of seasonal flu. While not a substitute for consulting with your doctor, the following web site helps people evaluate their symptoms:

www.flu.gov/evaluation.

However, some people are more likely to get flu complications, and they should talk to a health care provider about whether they need to be examined if they get flu symptoms. They are:

- Children younger than 5, but **especially** children younger than 2 years old
- People 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- People who have:
 - Cancer
 - Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
 - Chronic lung disease (including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD))
 - Diabetes
 - Heart disease
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Neurological disorders (including nervous system, brain or spinal cord)
 - Neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
 - Weakened immune systems (including people with AIDS)



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Emergency signs of a serious infection include:

- In children:
 - fast or troubled breathing
 - bluish skin color
 - not drinking enough fluids
 - not waking up or interacting
 - being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and a worse cough
 - fever with a rash
- In adults:
 - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - sudden dizziness/confusion
 - severe/persistent vomiting
 - flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and a worse cough

If any of these emergency signs are noticed, seek medical attention immediately.

At this time, the Health Department along with the CDC recommends businesses, schools, day cares and the like remain open if a case of H1N1 is identified. These facilities should follow the protocols they have in place for any ill person.

To prevent H1N1 influenza, seasonal influenza and the spread of the common cold, Dr. Chapman recommends:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to lessen the spread of respiratory illness
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or tissue -- then wash your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill

Information on the H1N1 vaccine can be found at www.myflusafety.com, or by calling the H1N1 vaccine information line at 1-877-352-3581.

For more information on H1N1 (Swine Flu) you can visit these regularly updated websites: www.HealthyOkaloosa.com, www.cdc.gov, www.doh.state.fl.us.

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