

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Klickitat County Public Health
Contact: Erinn Quinn
Director for Klickitat County Public Health
publichealthpio@klickitatcounty.org
www.klickitatcounty.org



COVID-19 VACCINATIONS ARRIVE IN KLICKITAT COUNTY

Frontline healthcare workers throughout the county to be the first to receive the vaccine

Goldendale, WA, December 17, 2020 – Shipments of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine started arriving in Washington State this week following the emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on December 11, 2020.

The first COVID-19 vaccines were delivered today to Klickitat Valley Health with the purpose of vaccinating high priority healthcare workers. The first group of healthcare workers to be vaccinated are those who will be administering the vaccine and includes the staff at Klickitat Valley Health (KVH), NorthShore Medical Group, and Skyline Health. Next to be vaccinated will be the first responders.

The first frontline healthcare providers from both county hospitals and NorthShore Medical Group will be vaccinated promptly, kicking off Klickitat County’s participation in the largest vaccination campaign in United States history.

“This is the hopeful light at the end of the tunnel,” states Leslie Hiebert, CEO of Klickitat Valley Health. “But we still have a long road ahead of us. While the vaccine has arrived, we are urging the public to continue to wear masks and practice social distancing. The best way to beat this virus is not to get it in the first place. This is not the time to let our guard down.”

The doses in the initial shipment are being allocated according to Phase 1A guidelines released by the Washington State Department of Health. Phase 1A focuses on high-risk workers in healthcare settings and high-risk first responders in order to protect the county’s medical care response capacity. Also included in Phase 1A are residents and staff of nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other community-based congregate living settings where most individuals are over 65 years of age.

The vaccine requires recipients to receive a second dose to be most effective – 21 days later for the Pfizer vaccine and 28 days later for the Moderna vaccine. The Moderna vaccine is scheduled to be distributed beginning December 22, 2020. The vast majority of county residents will have access to the vaccine by spring or summer, according to federal reports.

The vaccine arrives at time when positive case counts are surging in Klickitat County. In the first two weeks of December alone there were over 100 reported cases of COVID-19 in the county. This number equates to the total reported positive cases between March through July.

“We need to see this go in the other direction and start to decrease,” said Erinn Quinn, Klickitat County Public Health Director. “Every day we are getting reports of positive test results that eclipse the numbers we saw early on in this pandemic.”

Skyline Health and KVH are both critical-access hospitals with limited capacity and limited resources for large-scale health events. Neither hospital staff or maintain intensive care unit beds. This means they rely on larger hospitals to assist in patient transfers – not just for COVID-19 patients, but also for emergencies such as heart attacks and strokes.

“Both Skyline and KVH have protocols in place for a surge. However, if we do not reduce the spread of the virus in our communities, our neighbors and loved ones will be waiting for advanced care or may not get it at all,” said Robb Kimmes, CEO of Skyline Health.

With the year anniversary fast approaching of the first reported case of COVID-19 in the United States here in Washington, ‘Covid fatigue’ has affected healthcare workers and communities, alike.

“This is like the last couple miles of a marathon. We feel the fatigue, too,’ said Quinn. “The vaccine gives us hope that there is an end in sight. We need this vaccine and we are ready. This is monumental in our work of caring for patients and our communities who need us the most right now.”

Health care providers in Klickitat County have been looking forward to receiving the vaccine, including Dr. Greg Zuck, a provider at North Shore Medical Group. “Patients often ask ‘Dr. Zuck, what will you do when the vaccine is available?’ and I’ll be happy to say that I’ve already received the COVID-19 vaccine,” states Dr. Zuck.

About Klickitat County Public Health

Klickitat County Public Health is always working for a safer and healthier community. As the region’s public health leader and partner, we are committed to excellence through innovative programs, community partnerships and a fundamental dedication to promote and protect the health of all Klickitat County residents.

###

For More Information:

Klickitat County Public Health: www.klickitatcounty.org/289/Public-Health

Klickitat Valley Health: www.kvhealth.net

Skyline Health: www.mskylinehealth.org

Northshore Medical Group: www.northshore-medical.com

COVID-19 Risk Assessment Dashboard:

<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-risk-assessment-dashboard>

CDC Frequently Asked Influenza (Flu) Questions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm>