



Charlotte County reports first death linked to swine flu

Officials: Woman, 46

By DREW WINCHESTER, dwinchester@breezenewspapers.com

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Swine flu has claimed the life of a 46-year-old Charlotte County woman, the first death in the county from H1N1 complications.

Charlotte County Health Department spokesman Adam DuBois confirmed the death Wednesday.

"The medical examiner concluded their case today. It seems she died from bronchial pneumonia with complication from H1N1," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and the Federal Drug Administration recently announced that a H1N1 vaccine should be available soon.

Recent tests have shown that no adverse side effects have resulted from clinical trials of the vaccine, according to the Florida State Health Department.

With the federal government concluding its tests on the H1N1 vaccination, local health departments are prepping their distribution plans.

DuBois said Charlotte County will approach its plans much in the same way as the Lee County Health Department.

"At risk" groups will be targeted first for the vaccine, including people ages 6 months to 24 years old, pregnant women, emergency responders and public health workers.

DuBois expects the vaccine to be delivered in two to three weeks.

Though vaccinations will not be mandated, DuBois said the health organization should have enough for every resident in Charlotte.

"We should have a vaccination for every person," he said. "We're estimating receiving 167,000 doses."

No personal information was released about the woman, but enough has been announced regarding her medical history and condition to indicate that pre-existing health problems played a part in her death.

"This person did have underlying health conditions," DuBois said. "The flu could have been that final piece that took her life."

The Florida Department of Health recently launched a Web site specifically for swine flu: MyFluSafety.com.

The state has also launched a flu hotline at (877) 352-3581 that is active 24 hours a day. The line is staffed from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. seven days a week.