FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Panhandle Health District Reports First Flu Death of the Season
Health officials urging the public to get vaccinated

HAYDEN, ID – Panhandle Health District (PHD) reported Idaho’s first influenza-related death for the 2017-2018 influenza, “flu,” season. A northern Idaho male over the age of 50 died due to complications from an influenza infection. This could be an indication of an early flu season.

“We are seeing sporadic influenza activity in some northern Idaho counties,” said Jeff Lee, PHD Staff Epidemiologist. “I strongly encourage people to get their influenza vaccination now, so there is time to develop immunity before getting exposed to the flu virus.”

Vaccination is recommended for everyone age 6 months and older. It is the best way to keep yourself healthy and stop the influenza virus from spreading to others. Influenza can be severe and even deadly for vulnerable populations including infants, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions and the elderly. There were 72 flu-related deaths in Idaho during the 2016-17 flu season. Twenty of those occurred in Panhandle Health District counties.

PHD also recommends protecting yourself by taking the following measures:

- Wash hands with soap frequently and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, especially after you cough, sneeze or touch your face.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow. Droplets from a sneeze can travel up to six feet.
- Stay home when sick and do not return to work until 24 hours after a fever is gone.

Flu activity is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, a cough, sore throat or other respiratory issues. If you are exhibiting any of these symptoms, you are encouraged to contact your primary care provider.

Flu vaccinations are currently offered at PHD clinics, physician offices, and many pharmacies and grocery stores.

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