



For more information contact:  
John D. Law  
Telephone: 304.558.7899  
Cell: 304.546.5162

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## **West Virginia's first H1N1 death points up need to continue good health practices**

In light of news today that a 51-year-old West Virginia resident has died from complications from H1N1, Dr. Cathy Slemp, state health officer, is urging West Virginians to continue good health practices to prevent the spread of the virus.

"We are very sorry to hear about this death and our condolences go to the family," Slemp said. "Based on what we've seen across the globe with this strain and the effects of any influenza virus in general, death from H1N1 or swine flu is not unexpected. As with any flu, we may see additional deaths from flu-related complications so West Virginians should be prepared for that news."

State officials continue preparations for the upcoming 2009-2010 flu season by sharing the latest H1N1 information with local health departments, community partners and health care personnel. Slemp said today's sad news serves as a reminder about the seriousness of influenza which can lead to hospitalizations and deaths.

As always, people at increased risk of flu complications should contact their healthcare provider early if they have flu like symptoms to discuss the need for antiviral or other medications. Individuals at increased risk include pregnant women, children less than 5 years old (especially those under 2) and persons with health problems like diabetes, lung disease or weakened immune systems. Otherwise healthy people with mild disease usually do not need to seek medical care.

She said residents should continue using good hygiene and flu prevention methods that include washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, discarding used tissues, staying home when ill and getting the vaccines when available.

H1N1 vaccine is expected to arrive in West Virginia by mid-October. Seasonal flu vaccine is now increasingly available in communities.

More information, including a fact sheet on managing H1N1 illness, is available at [www.wvdhhr.org](http://www.wvdhhr.org).