

Press Release

N.C. DHHS Reports First Child Flu Fatality for 2013-14 Season

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 13, 2014

Contact: news@dhhs.nc.gov

919-855-4840

Raleigh, N.C. - North Carolina has reported the state's first child death from flu for the 2013-2014 flu season. An infant in the eastern region of the state died on January 13 because of complications associated with influenza. (To protect the family's privacy, the infant's hometown, county and sex are not being released.) Although the infant was too young to receive a flu vaccination, the tragic event emphasizes the need for everyone to take precautions.

"Losing a child is one of the greatest challenges a person will ever face and our hearts go out to the child's family," said State Health Director Robin Gary Cummings. "We hope that if there is any positive to come out of this tragedy it will be that our residents will understand how serious the flu can be and take precautions, including getting a flu vaccination."

Last week, DHHS health officials reported 21 deaths associated with seasonal influenza. Of those 21 deaths, 19 were young and middle-aged adults, most of whom had underlying medical conditions. Only two deaths have been reported in persons over 65. (Updated summary describing flu activity through January 11 will be released Thursday.)

In addition to flu vaccination, public health experts recommend taking additional precautions against illness, including washing your hands often with soap and water, and staying away from others who may have the flu.

Flu activity has been widespread in North Carolina since mid-December. High levels of flu activity are expected to continue over the coming weeks, as flu season typically peaks during January and February. Flu vaccine is widely available and protects against the strains of flu circulating this year, including H1N1, the most common flu strain so far this year.

For more information on flu prevention and treatment and to find out where you can get a flu vaccination in your community, visit www.flu.nc.gov or contact Cherokee County Health Department at 828-837-7486 .

###