



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Frederick County Health Department

# News Release

CONTACT: Angela Blair  
Public Information Representative  
Health Education and Promotion  
301-600-1861  
TTY: Use Maryland Relay  
[ablair@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:ablair@frederickcountymd.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**NOVEMBER 4, 2009**

## **UPDATE: H1N1 FLU VACCINATION APPOINTMENT LINE** THOSE WITH APPOINTMENTS WILL RECEIVE VACCINE AT NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> CLINIC

**FREDERICK, MD --** The H1N1 Flu Vaccination Appointment line, which opened at 9:00 am this morning experienced significant difficulties after phone lines were overwhelmed due to extremely high call volume. We understand that callers had difficulty getting through to the appointment line and had various experiences depending upon when they called. We have been in on-going communication with the appointment call center and wish to offer our current understanding of the situation based upon information available from the appointment call center at this time.

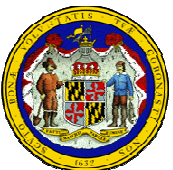
While the appointment center planned for high call volume by designating between 260-280 operators, reports from the professional call center (with whom the Health Department contracted) estimate that between 10,000-20,000 calls were received within the first hour. Operators began scheduling appointments in the order in which they were received until the call center was contacted by the phone company within a few minutes of the phone line going live and advised that they were at risk of being closed due to the stress being placed on the entire phone system. As a result, the appointment call center made an independent decision to create a message prompting callers to leave messages. The call center then returned all calls in the order in which they were received (whether a person left a message or not) and scheduled appointments accordingly. Because the situation

**--more--**

Barbara A. Brookmyer, M.D., M.P.H. ▪ Health Officer

350 Montevue Lane ▪ Frederick, MD 21702

Phone: 301-600-1029 ▪ Fax: 301-600-3111 ▪ MD TTY: 1-800-735-2258





## H1N1 Flu Clinic / Page 2

unfolded rapidly, early communication as to what changes had taken place with the appointment making process were not clear to the Health Department and a decision was made to stop taking additional appointments because we did not want to overbook and we wanted to ensure that the first call/first served approach was not compromised. A message was then activated indicating that the appointment line was closed. However, everyone who left messages will have their call returned and every number that was logged in their system as having called, even if no message was left from that number, will be called and information will be provided as to where they can find future flu clinic information from the Health Department.

The appointment call center has advised that they are confident they did not overbook and that appointments were taken in the order received regardless of whether a message was left or not. However, we cannot say for certain that all 800 appointment slots were scheduled (300 of the appointments were for pregnant women only- for the thimerosal free vaccine- and we understand that few calls were received from this target group). Vaccine will be provided to those who received an appointment at the November 6<sup>th</sup> clinic. Details regarding the November 6<sup>th</sup> clinic are available at [www.frederickcountymd.gov/fluclinics](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov/fluclinics).

The Health Department sincerely regrets any frustration or confusion resulting from the problems created by this extraordinary response. We recognize that the current demand for vaccine far exceeds what we currently have available. Therefore, it was our hope that an appointment system would offer an efficient and more customer-friendly approach in order to avoid the experience of other jurisdictions where people have waited in line for 8 hours or more for vaccine that they may or may not receive. Clearly, the demands created significant technological problems beyond what the system could manage. For this reason, the Health Department will further assess the technological capabilities of using an appointment call center and will determine what approach to utilize for future clinics.

We recognize these circumstances are difficult for those eager to be vaccinated, and we ask for your continued patience. The Health Department does anticipate receiving more vaccine and offering additional H1N1 flu vaccine clinics for priority groups in the near future. We also want to remind the public to check with your healthcare provider as the majority of the vaccine has been distributed to the private sector. Please check our website at [www.frederickcountymd.gov/fluclinics](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov/fluclinics), or you may call our flu information line at 301-600-3035 for future flu clinic announcements.

###