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Hundreds queue up for H1N1 flu shot

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FREMONT -- Hundreds of people waited Saturday in the cold outside Fremont Ross High School to receive the H1N1 vaccination. The orderly crowd was grateful to be among the first in the county to be vaccinated against swine flu.

Sandusky County Health Commissioner Dave Pollick said a shipment of the vaccinations arrived unexpectedly on Tuesday, and the Sandusky County Health Department quickly made preparations to distribute them.

The shipment included 700 mist vaccines and 500 injections. Sarah Harrigan and her children, Jacob and Hannah Rowe and Georgianna Lochotzki, came because she is a nurse and two of her children have asthma.

"They hope they can get the nasal vaccination, if they can," she said.

But the mist vaccines were not being distributed on a first-come-first serve basis. "Some people aren't indicated for the mist, because it's a live vaccine," Pollick said. The mist vaccines were given when only when it was safe to do so, until they ran out.

The vaccinations -- both mist and injections -- were not available to the general public, but were reserved for priority groups.

Those groups as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are health care and EMS workers, pregnant women, those who live or work with children less than 6 months old, children and young adults 6 months through 24 years, and people 25 to 64 years old with underlying health problems that affect immunity.

Before receiving a vaccination, each person underwent a health history interview to see if they fit into one of the priority groups.

"If they don't fit a category, we will have to respectfully decline to serve them," Pollick said. "Hopefully, we'll be able to serve them later."

Pollick stressed that this is only the first of many H1N1 vaccination shipments that will arrive in the coming months, and those that weren't able to receive the vaccinations on Saturday shouldn't worry. "There'll be many more coming," he said, stressing that there have been no official H1N1 cases reported in the county.

More than 30 health department workers and volunteers kept the line going as quickly as possible. Four off-duty police officers were hired through federal funding to keep order and be on hand in case anyone who was denied the vaccine caused trouble.

As of mid-morning, the crowd was cold and anxious, but in good spirits.

"It's been a very orderly crowd. I must say I'm very proud of the people here," Pollick said. "Very few people arrived before time for the clinic to open."

Workers directed people from triage to the forms area to the clerical area, and then to receive the vaccination. Cots were set up for those who felt they needed a short rest before going home.

Many of the people who came to the clinic were there on the advice of their doctors. Karrie Butler, of Fremont, said her obstetrician recommended she receive the vaccine because she is pregnant, and Pat Brudzinski, also of Fremont, said her rheumatologist sent her there because she has lupus.

"I came for my son. He's 3," said Erica Dashner, referring to her son, Jackson Dashner. "His pediatrician recommended it just because of his age. She said little kids are more prone to get it."

"My place of work didn't have any regular flu shots, and she (the human resources director) recommended I come here," said Mike Cagle, of Green Springs "She said it's a different strain, and I should come."



People waited in the cold outside Fremont Ross High School on Saturday to be among the first in the county to receive the swine flu vaccine. (Sheri Trusty News-Messenger correspondent)