

Voluntary smallpox immunizations to be provided

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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President Bush today announced his smallpox vaccination policy. This policy is designed to protect the public by assuring that those who would respond to a smallpox outbreak have previously been protected by smallpox vaccine. The President stressed there is no evidence of an imminent threat that smallpox virus will be released.

The Alabama Department of Public Health, in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will provide smallpox vaccinations to select personnel from hospitals and health departments who volunteer to serve on smallpox response teams. The department plans to begin these vaccinations during the latter half of January 2003. An estimated 12,000 Alabama healthcare workers will form these teams.

Upon completion of these vaccinations, ADPH will begin offering smallpox vaccinations to all other healthcare providers and first responders including emergency medical responders, law enforcement personnel and firefighters

"As stated by the President, I wish to emphasize that vaccination is not recommended at this time for the general public," said Dr. Donald E. Williamson, state health officer. "If, despite this recommendation, there are citizens who feel strongly about receiving the vaccination, we will accommodate them according to forthcoming CDC recommendations."

ADPH will work with all of our partners in the healthcare and first-responder communities to make this initiative successful.

12/13/02