

Alabama begins smallpox vaccinations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public health employees who are members of response teams began receiving smallpox vaccinations today, Feb. 18 at 2 p.m. Vaccinations took place at eight clinic sites around the state, and will continue at four additional clinic sites later this week.

The Alabama Department of Public Health received 10,000 doses of smallpox vaccine on Feb. 11 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The department will vaccinate key members of the public health response teams so that regional teams can then move forward with scheduling vaccination clinics for members of health care response teams at hospitals throughout the state.

"We have distributed the smallpox vaccine to local area health departments," said Dr. Charles Woernle, assistant state health officer for disease control and prevention. "By vaccinating this first team of responders we are ensuring we have a core group of trained, protected professionals."

Local area public health personnel are working with hospitals that wish to have voluntary vaccination of appropriate health care providers who would serve on the hospital response team. Local sites will be determined based on the response from the hospital community. The first phase of smallpox vaccination for health department and hospital personnel should take approximately 45 days.

Alabama's smallpox preparedness plans include the creation of vaccinated teams

across the state. Each of the 11 public health regions into which Alabama has been organized is expected to have one smallpox public health response team and one or more hospital-based smallpox health care response teams. Should there be an actual case or cases of smallpox identified, these teams will be mobilized to vaccinate and follow up with persons exposed, and to care for those with smallpox.

Additional information on smallpox and smallpox vaccine can also be found on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at <http://www.adph.org/riskcommunications>

