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HUMBOLDT COUNTY: COVID VACCINATIONS ARE COMING, BUT TIMELINE IS NOT CLEAR

WINNEMUCCA, Nev.—Monday, January 11, Governor Steve Sisolak updated the state’s priority schedule for COVID-19 vaccinations.

For Humboldt County officials, the news that Nevadans age 70 and older will now be prioritized alongside frontline/essential workers came as a surprise. “It was a good surprise,” said Humboldt County Manager Dave Mendiola, “but it was still a surprise.”

Monday, the governor emphasized that Nevada has no control over the timing of additional vaccine shipments; the state’s rollout depends on the federal government.

Mendiola said that means Humboldt County is not only dependent on the federal government sending vaccines, but then receiving an appropriate allocation from the state.

“We personally understand the frustration that vaccine-ready residents are feeling,” said Mendiola, “but we are asking for patience. While we don’t know exactly when the vaccines will come, when they do, we’ll be ready.”

Previously the top priority under the general population was residents age 75 and older. Monday, the governor lowered the age on that priority group to 70 while creating a "parallel lanes" structure that calls for essential frontline workers and high-risk populations to be vaccinated around the same time, provided vaccine supplies arrive as expected.

In the general population, ages 70 and older would receive the vaccine first, ages 65 to 69 years would be next in line, and those ages 64 to 16 years with pre-existing conditions would follow.

Individuals with disabilities, Nevada's homeless population, healthy adults ages 16-64, and Nevada Department of Correction inmates would follow in priority.

“The good news,” said Mendiola, “is people want to be vaccinated. We know that from the sheer amount of questions we’ve received.”

Mendiola continued, “I feel confident that by April or May of this year, everyone who wants a vaccine will likely have one, but the timing of vaccinations until then is still up in the air.”

Humboldt County Health Nurse Marsha Foreman, RN, has been working tirelessly to vaccinate Humboldt County’s Tier 1 group, which has included all healthcare and associated workers; she and her team have been finishing the second in the two-vaccine series this week.

For the coming “parallel lanes” groups, she is hoping to conduct a multi-day POD (point of distribution) event at the Winnemucca Event Center, much like the yearly flu PODs that take place each September.

“That’s our hope, when we know we can get vaccines,” said Foreman, “but the ‘when’ is the holdup.”

Humboldt County Emergency Manager Captain Sean Wilkin is helping to steer that effort and Mendiola said there aren’t two more capable people in Nevada to take on the task.

“We are fortunate to have Marsha and Sean working with us,” said Mendiola. “I have total faith in their abilities to get this accomplished.”

Still, Mendiola said local healthcare resources are overwhelmed right now, with COVID-19 testing, care and vaccination.

“I am asking residents to trust that as we get vaccine supplies, we will share that information as quickly and widely as we can through local media, social media, healthcare offices, retail businesses and more,” he said.

“In the meantime, we sincerely ask that people don’t call the Community Health Nurse, Humboldt General Hospital, Humboldt County or others to request inoculations or information,” he said. “We will share that information when it’s available.”

Mendiola added, “We want that vaccine to come as much as our residents do. When it does, we’re not going to sit on it; it will be available to the next priority population.”

For more information, the [State of Nevada’s vaccination playbook](#) includes guidelines for rolling out the vaccine statewide; the [“parallel lanes” structure](#) provides information on the updated priority structure.

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