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**Subject: First H1N1 Related Death
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For Immediate Release

Kings Co. Health Officer Announces First H1N1 Influenza Death

Kings County –“H1N1 influenza has claimed the life of a retired Kings County woman,” Kings County Health Officer Michael Mac Lean announced today. This woman is one of five county residents who’ve been hospitalized because of H1N1 influenza. As of August 25, there have been 128 H1N1 influenza related deaths in California.

H1N1 influenza is a novel virus. It first appeared in the spring of this year. It has spread rapidly across the world. Typically influenza cases peak in mid-winter. Cases have continued to be reported in the county and in California throughout this summer. Because it’s novel we don’t know what will happen during the traditional influenza season but it’s prudent for us to plan for an upswing in cases during the more usual winter influenza season.

Compared with typical seasonal influenza, this virus is relatively mild. This case reminds us that any influenza virus can cause serious illness and death in some people. It’s estimated that between 20,000 and 40,000 influenza related deaths occur every year. H1N1 influenza so far has been atypical in that it has disproportionately affected children and younger adults.

An H1N1 vaccine is in development. If all goes well, some of the vaccine will be available in Kings County in November. The initial priority groups will be:

- Children age 6 months to four years old
- Children 5-17 with medical conditions that put that at high risk for complications
- Persons who live with or take care of infants <6 months of age.
- Pregnant women
- Health care workers who have direct contact with patients

There are actions that people can take to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid attendance at large gatherings.

The public can get more information about H1N1 influenza at:
www.countyofkings.com/health/homepage/H1N1 or by calling: 582 3211 ex 4690.