



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

**Bob Wise**  
Governor

**Paul L. Nusbaum**  
Secretary

TO: LHD Administrators  
NPS Coordinators

FROM: Cathy Slempp  
WV Bureau for Public Health

DATE: February 12, 2003

SUBJECT: Sample info for coworkers

Attached you'll find a copy of the memo we are sending out to our DHHR staff, simply to share information and address possible concerns of staff as co-workers are vaccinated. Please feel free to adapt it to the specific situation of your agency.



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## Information for DHHR Employees Smallpox Vaccination of DHHR Response Team

The following is provided to share information and to address potential questions of co-workers regarding pre-event smallpox vaccination of selected DHHR staff.

As you know, President Bush has recommended smallpox vaccination of public health and hospital response team members. This recommendation is based on the very low, yet possible chance of smallpox being reintroduced into the United States through an act of bioterrorism. The goal is to have a core of people trained and ready to rapidly and safely initiate response were such an event to happen.

WVDHHR has a long history of serving communities in response to threats and disasters. We routinely detect diseases, investigate outbreaks, vaccinate others, and mobilize communities. Responding to the threat of bioterrorism requires expanded efforts and additional personnel. Thus, DHHR has formed a bioterrorism response team to support community response, if needed, in an actual event. Several volunteers from across the department have come forward to join this team. They are a group of whom you and DHHR can be proud -- well-skilled and clearly committed to serving others both in DHHR and across the state.

In line with the President's recommendation, some team members have opted to be vaccinated against smallpox, furthering their readiness to respond. Since vaccination of response team members will begin in the near future, we share with you the following:

- ! The vaccine does not contain the smallpox virus. No one can get smallpox from this vaccine. The virus in the vaccine is called vaccinia virus. It is a related, weaker virus.
- ! In a workplace like ours, there is no significant risk of getting this virus from a vaccinated co-worker. Such transmission requires close physical contact with the sore formed by the vaccination or with something that has been in contact with that sore (e.g., bandages, etc.). Simply being near someone who has been vaccinated does not pose any risk.
- ! Vaccinees know how to care for the site safely. This includes keeping a bandage over the site, wearing a long sleeve shirt, good hand washing with soap and water after changing a bandage, and proper bandage disposal. Dressings will be changed by a vaccine safety monitor off site.
- ! Please do not ask to see a colleague's vaccination site.
- ! Please do express your appreciation for the job they are doing to help protect all of us. Each is truly a credit to DHHR and West Virginia.

You can find additional information on this vaccine at the CDC website [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov). If you have questions regarding this effort, please feel free to contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

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