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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST FLU-RELATED DEATH IN CANYON COUNTY

Avoid Flu, Stay Healthy

Southwest District Health confirmed the first influenza-associated death in Canyon County in a female, over 70, who resided in Nampa.

"The best gift you can give you and your family for the holidays is a flu vaccination," said Raemi Nolevanko, Epidemiologist for Southwest District Health. "It offers the best way to keep from getting sick with the flu or suffering from its potentially serious complications."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that some of the influenza strains circulating so far this season are different from the strains included in the influenza vaccine. Even so, Nolevanko explained that when vaccine effectiveness is reduced because of small changes in some of the flu viruses circulating, the vaccine still provides protection.

"There is evidence to suggest that a vaccination may lessen the severity and prevent influenza-related complications that require hospitalization or cause death. Such protection is possible because antibodies created through vaccination with one strain of influenza virus will often "cross-protect" against different but related strains of influenza viruses or at least reduce the severity of symptoms," she said.

The CDC recommends a flu vaccination for everyone six months of age and older, but especially for those who are at greater risk for serious illness. People at high risk include people with chronic underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or neurological conditions; pregnant women; those younger than five years or older than 65 years of age; or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Because influenza can be particularly severe in children and those over 65 years of age, public health officials recommend that everyone, especially people in schools and long-term care facilities, who hasn't received a flu vaccination should get one as soon as possible. Those who frequently visit these facilities should get a vaccination as well and refrain from visiting if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

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FIRST FLU-RELATED DEATH IN CANYON COUNTY
Southwest District Health
Page Two

Along with getting your influenza vaccination, it is important to practice good habits that may help decrease the spread of the flu. These include proper hand washing, covering your nose or mouth when you sneeze or cough, stay home from work and school when you are ill, and stay away from people who are sick.

If you have additional questions regarding flu, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/fag/>.

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