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COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Gov. Beshear: Seven More Kentucky Hospitals Receive COVID-19 Vaccine Shipments**

*Facilities join initial three; vaccination distribution in progress*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 15, 2020)** – On Tuesday, Gov. Andy Beshear announced that seven more Kentucky hospitals received shipments of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines and that the administration of thousands of vaccines are beginning to occur.

“The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are absolute game changers with 94-95% effectiveness and, it appears, minimal side effects,” Gov. Beshear said. “It gives us a view and a vision and a certainty of victory against this virus. We’ve just got to stay vigilant between now and when everybody can get it.”

Sharing photos of vaccine shipments received from hospitals across the state, the Governor said, “These front-line heroes know that we’ve got their back. They fought for us every single day. We value their safety and we need their help getting through these next couple of months.”

Facilities receiving vaccine deliveries late yesterday and today include Baptist Health in Corbin, Louisville and Madisonville; Norton Hospital in Louisville; UK

HealthCare in Lexington; Pikeville Medical Center; and St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Edgewood.

The seven facilities received shipments after UofL Health in Louisville, Baptist Health Lexington and the Medical Center at Bowling Green received the first shipments provided in Kentucky. Gov. Beshear announced receipt of the vaccines yesterday and looked on as the first vaccines were given to Kentuckians. To learn more about yesterday's announcement, see the [full release](#).

St. Elizabeth CEO Garren Colvin noted, "St. Elizabeth Healthcare is honored to be among the first health care organizations in the commonwealth to receive the COVID-19 vaccine allocations. Being able to provide an additional layer of defense to our front-line associates and physicians who, in their line of work, have the most risk of exposure to COVID-19 patients is critical. This is a landmark moment in health care history, and we are grateful to help lead these vital efforts for the greater health of our community."

"Though the process is a significant logistical challenge, the Governor, Dr. Stack, and staff have made it as seamless as possible," said Pikeville Medical Center CEO Donovan Blackburn. "As the largest regional hospital in Eastern Kentucky, we fully understand the need to protect our health care infrastructure by vaccinating our dedicated staff. They have stood on the front line during these difficult, unprecedented times. The distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is a huge step in dismantling the pandemic."

"After 10 months of being on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are excited for the good news that a vaccine is now available and that we can offer it to some of our health care workers at UK HealthCare," said Dr. Mark Newman, UK executive vice president for health affairs. "We will be providing the first vaccinations to our front-line workers, employees who have direct patient care primarily for COVID-19 patients or under investigation for COVID-19. While we know that we have a long way to go in ending this pandemic, we are grateful to be part of this momentous first step."

### **Case Information**

As of 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 15, Gov. Beshear reported the following COVID-19 numbers:

- New cases today: 2,946

- New deaths today: 15
- Positivity rate: 8.53%
- Total deaths: 2,239
- Currently hospitalized: 1,788
- Currently in ICU: 438
- Currently on ventilator: 246

Top counties with the most positive cases today are: Jefferson, Fayette, Warren, Daviess and Madison. Each of these counties reported 100 or more new cases; Jefferson County alone reported 418.

The red zone counties for this week can be found [here](#). Community leaders, businesses, schools and families in these counties should all follow [red zone reduction recommendations](#), as well as other orders and guidance.

Those reported lost to the virus today include a 68-year-old man from Boyd County; a 62-year-old woman from Caldwell County; a 77-year-old and 80-year old man from Daviess County; an 88-year-old woman from Graves County; a 77-year-old man from Hardin County; five men from Jefferson County, ages, 61, 64, 78, 83 and 92; a 90-year-old man from McCracken County; and three women from Ohio County, ages 87, and two, both of whom were 91.

Federal coronavirus coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx was in Kentucky today, meeting with Gov. Beshear, Department for Public Health Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack and Kentucky General Assembly leaders.

The Governor thanked Dr. Birx for the visit and for applauding the state's proactive measures that helped to slow the spread of the virus. The Governor noted that Kentucky has fared better than many other states.

Dr. Stack said the pandemic's third surge is rising more rapidly than seen in the previous surges. The current surge is also broader, involving more counties simultaneously. This surge is also lasting longer, nearly twice as long so far from initiation of rapid spread to plateau.

Further, the pattern of the rapid increase in case numbers and accompanying hospitalizations and fatalities are also being observed across the nation, beginning with the Northern Plains.

“As the weather cools and Americans gather indoors, we expect to see a rise in cases following indoor gatherings where masks were not worn,” Dr. Stack said.

The need for testing has not slipped in importance, Dr. Stack added. Asymptomatic, or silent transmission, is “a critical component of viral spread and must be identified through testing.” He equated the importance of testing as on par with masking, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.

### **Memorial**

Kentucky lost a hero Dec. 11 in the passing of Chief Robert Lee Orkies of Shepherdsville after a battle with cancer and COVID-19. Chief Orkies was only 55. His family shared that he was destined to be a hero and those who knew Rob, knew his heart was big enough to love more than just one family. He was passionate about firefighting, which started in 1984 and never left him. He loved the brotherhood of the firefighters and felt driven to be a leader. He had the opportunity to work for several fire departments in various roles, but cherished his time as the Chief of the Zoneton Fire District.

“To Rob’s family, to those little granddaughters, we are so sorry for your loss,” Gov. Beshear said. “In his honor, we’re going to protect other people just like he did during his life. We’re going to wear masks, we’re going to do right by our neighbor and we’re going to live up to the example he set for all of us.”

### **Other News**

Today, the Governor highlighted two new jobs announcements. [iwis-Daido LLC](#), a new joint venture between iwis engine systems LLC and Daido Corp. of America, is expected to add 37 well-paying jobs in Murray with a \$2.7 million investment for the production of high-quality automotive engine chains. [Span Tech LLC](#), which designs and produces plastic chain conveyor systems for manufacturers, plans to expand in Barren County with a \$13.2 million investment expected to create 40 full-time jobs over the next 10 years.

The Governor reminded Kentuckians that applications for the *Healthy at Home* Eviction Relief Fund are staying open until all funds are exhausted, which is believed to be 24 to 48 hours from the time of this release. This reopening will be for past due rent for March through December 2020 only; future rent does not apply. It is estimated that about \$1.4 million will be available. When CARES Act funding is exhausted, applications will close again. Kentuckians may [apply here](#). The Governor also congratulated the Kentucky Air National Guard’s 123rd Airlift Wing in Louisville, which just earned its 19th Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

The award is bestowed for excellence in mission performance, deployments, readiness, inspection results and community involvement. Only top 10% of units earn this award and this is Kentucky's seventh consecutive award.

**More Information**

To view the [full daily report](#), [incidence rate map](#), [new statewide requirements](#), testing locations, long term-care and other congregate facilities update, school reports and [guidance](#), [red zone counties](#), [red zone recommendations](#), the White House Coronavirus Task Force reports for Kentucky and other key guidance visit, [kycovid19.ky.gov](http://kycovid19.ky.gov).

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