

Ute Indian Tribe Announces Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

Fort Duchesne, UT (Dec. 23, 2020) — The Ute Indian Tribe has announced its Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution and Communication Plan for the Uintah and Ouray Reservation (Resolution No. 20-546). According to the Business Committee, the tribe’s elected governing body, this plan is a critical step toward defeating the novel coronavirus and ensuring the health and safety of tribal members.

The plan clearly identifies priority populations during each phase of vaccine distribution, and it reflects expert guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Indian Health Service.

“The CDC has identified healthcare personnel and those in long-term care facilities as top-priority populations, and they will receive the first 20 to 40 million vaccine doses in the United States,” said Business Committee Chairman Luke Duncan. “It’s important to recognize the many unknowns that exist, however — for example, the efficacy of any given vaccine in patients of different ages or with certain conditions, and how that might influence prioritization. For this reason, the Ute Indian Tribe will remain flexible and responsive to additional guidance by IHS and the CDC.”

Duncan also noted that the phases of vaccine distribution are dependent on the quantity of vaccine available. Early phases are based on limited availability and will be handled on a pro rata basis by population, while later phases anticipate widespread availability.

Ute Indian Tribe Priority Schedule:

- Phase 1A. Healthcare personnel
- Phase 1B. Residents and patients of long-term care facilities
- Phase 2A. Essential workers with direct interaction with the public or in high-density workplaces
- Phase 2B. Adults 65+ (tribal elders) and adults with high-risk medical conditions regardless of age and incarcerated individuals
- Phase 3. Essential workers without direct interaction with the public or high-density settings

Phase 4. Adults, 18-64, who did not receive the vaccine in phases 1-3

As of Dec. 7, the date of plan enactment, two Covid-19 vaccine developers had announced successful late-stage clinical trials; six manufacturers continue to work on developing viable vaccine candidates. Pfizer trials reported more than 90 percent efficacy, and Moderna trials reported almost 95 percent efficacy at preventing Covid-19. Both manufacturers have applied for emergency use authorization from the FDA.

The Pfizer vaccine requires ultracold storage at minus 70 degrees Celsius, and Moderna requires cold storage and minus 20 degrees Celsius. Operation Warp Speed is working to develop storage solutions for administration sites that don't have this storage capacity, including shipping the vaccines in storage units with dry ice, and allowing storage sites to replace the dry ice to extend the vaccine's life in the shipment container. Experts believe that life can be extended by 15 days in the shipper.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) required to administer the vaccine will be provided with the doses. Except for Pfizer, all vaccine candidates will be distributed in kits with 100 doses; Pfizer kits contain 975 doses. Pfizer will ship vaccines directly to administration sites, while other vaccines will go from the manufacturer to McKesson, the federal contractor for vaccine distribution. McKesson will handle distribution for those vaccines.

Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require a second dose. Pfizer doses should be administered 21 days apart, and Moderna doses 28 days apart. Vaccine kits will include tracking cards, and patients will be encouraged to take photos of their cards in case the cards are lost.

Duncan advised that certain patients should consider waiting for the second round of Covid-19 vaccines based on specific precautions.

“If you are currently experiencing acute illness with Covid-19, have recovered from Covid-19 within the last three months, suffer from severe allergies or autoimmune disease in active flare, have a surgical procedure scheduled within the next 48 hours, or are experiencing moderate to severe illness with a fever, discuss the potential risks of vaccination with your doctor,” he advised.

The Ute Indian Tribe is currently communicating with tribal members via Facebook on the Ute Indian Tribe Emergency Management page, *Ute Bulletin*, and the *News From Ute Country* bulletin; and every Tuesday at 9 a.m., a weekly radio broadcast provides up-to-date information and guidance.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Safety is regularly communicating with healthcare providers, sharing up-to-date information on testing times and locations, scheduling information, and supply levels. Information regarding vaccines will also be communicated through these channels as it becomes available.

For more information, contact UIT Emergency Manager Felecia Pike-Cuch at (435) 725-4891.

About the Ute Indian Tribe

The Ute Indian Tribe resides on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in northeastern Utah. Three bands of Utes comprise the Ute Indian Tribe: the Whiteriver Band, the Uncompahgre Band and the Uintah Band. The tribe has a membership of more than 3,000 individuals, with more than half living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. The Ute Indian Tribe operates its own tribal government and oversees approximately 1.3 million acres of trust land that contains significant oil and gas deposits. The Ute Business Committee is the governing council of the tribe.

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