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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **St. Louis County Reaches Agreement with SSM Health For Faster Vaccinations for First Responders**

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MO (January 27, 2021)** In partnership with the St. Louis Metropolitan Pandemic Task Force, St. Louis County is collaborating with SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to as many as 4,000 area first responders.

Under the agreement, first responders in the St. Louis County area – including St. Louis County police and fire personnel as well as county-based federal law enforcement employees – will start receiving vaccinations at the hospital on Monday morning. More than 650 first responders have already made appointments, filling the first three days in the schedule. SSM Health is providing vaccine and medical personnel to administer it.

“We continue building partnerships to get vaccines into arms as quickly as possible, and we thank SSM Health for stepping up to help get our first responders vaccinated,” St. Louis County Executive Dr. Sam Page said. “We will have other partnerships to announce within the coming days.”

Among the departments invited to participate are the St. Louis County Police Department, all municipal police and fire departments in the county and federal agencies based in the region, including the FBI and Homeland Security. Also, while the city of St. Louis is taking the lead on vaccinating that city’s first responders, this opportunity is open to them as well.

Under guidelines mandated by the state of Missouri, first responders are in the Phase 1B Tier 1 category. The St. Louis County Department of Public Health vaccinated some 330 of the county’s first responders last weekend. The agreement will allow a dramatic increase in the speed and pace of first-responder vaccinations, given DPH’s limited supply of vaccine.

“First responder vaccines have been one of St. Louis County’s biggest priorities,” Michele Ryan, director of the St. Louis County Police Department’s Office of Emergency Management, said. “This agreement allows our DPH staff to focus on the other tiers in phase 1. We are extremely grateful for the partnership with SSM Health and SLUH to allow all of our area first responders be vaccinated in an expedited manner. Keeping our first responder infrastructure healthy is a great step in protecting those many citizens that they come in contact with daily.”

Spring Schmidt, acting co-director of DPH, said the county has always prioritized police and other first responders, but that the supply of vaccine from the state has limited DPH’s ability to quickly vaccinate them.

“We are thrilled and thankful that SSM Health and the task force has worked with us to provide such quick service to our first responders,” she said. “Vaccinating first responders offers protection for the entire community.”

If you have questions, please contact Christopher Ave, whose contact information is listed above.