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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 9, 2009

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THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOMMENDS TETANUS VACCINE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO SUFFER WOUNDS

TALLAHASSEE – With the amount of debris left by a flood, Floridians working on clean-up efforts could be at risk of sustaining injuries. Below is information on who may or may not need to receive a vaccination:

- Under normal conditions, all individuals should get a tetanus-diphtheria booster (Td) or a tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) booster every 10 years.
- If you sustain a minor clean wound and have not had a tetanus vaccination within the past 10 years, you will need a tetanus-diphtheria or tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Td or Tdap) booster.
- If you have a serious, puncture-type, or dirty wound, then you should receive a Td or Tdap booster within five years of last vaccination.
- If you sustain a wound or deep cut that concerns you, seek medical attention. Medical attention is required to determine if a tetanus booster is needed.
- Proper wound care is essential for all cuts and lacerations regardless of exposure to floodwaters.

WHAT IS TETANUS?

Tetanus, commonly called lockjaw, is a bacterial disease that affects the nervous system. It is contracted through a cut or wound that becomes contaminated with tetanus bacteria. The bacteria can penetrate even a tiny pinprick or scratch, but deep puncture wounds or cuts, like those made by nails, knives or barbed-wire, are especially susceptible to infection with tetanus. Tetanus bacteria are present worldwide and are commonly found in soil, dust and manure. Infection with tetanus causes severe muscle spasms, leading to "locking" of the jaw so that the patient cannot open his/her mouth or swallow, and may even lead to death by suffocation. Tetanus is not transmitted from person to person.

SYMPTOMS

Common first signs of tetanus are headache and muscular stiffness in the jaw (lockjaw) followed by stiffness of the neck, difficulty in swallowing, rigidity of abdominal muscles, spasms, sweating and fever. Symptoms usually begin eight days after the infection but may range in onset from three days to three weeks. Individuals deployed to work on recovery efforts are encouraged to contact their primary care provider or local CHD prior to deployment if they feel they need a tetanus-diphtheria shot. For further information, contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

The Florida Emergency Information Line: 1-800-342-3557

Public Information Emergency Support Function: 850-921-0384

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