



Knox County Health Department

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KCHD Investigation Reveals Discrepancy Concerning 975 Second-Dose Vaccines

Knoxville, Tenn. – The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) last week requested the State investigate a discrepancy of 975 second-dose Pfizer vaccines. Yesterday, the State confirmed the doses had been shipped to KCHD, but the Health Department has no record of receiving the vaccines.

“This is something you certainly hope never happens and we are working with the State to determine how it did,” said Senior Director and Public Health Officer Dr. Martha Buchanan. “It is an unfortunate situation, but in the meantime, our vaccination efforts continue unabated.”

The 975 doses are equivalent to 1.7 percent of all vaccines distributed in Knox County, where more than 56,000 vaccinations have been administered.

In the early stages of vaccination, Knox County distributed mainly Moderna vaccines—the logistical process of which is different from Pfizer. KCHD has been administering Pfizer vaccines for approximately three weeks, and this particular instance was the first time that KCHD had received doses from Pfizer.

KCHD was notified of the shipment of first-dose Pfizer vaccines, which are sent in unmarked boxes. That shipment was received as expected, but no shipment or delivery notification was received for the allotment of second-dose vaccines. Noticing the potential discrepancy, KCHD immediately reached out to the Tennessee Department of Health to further investigate.

Pfizer uses GPS-enabled thermal sensors to track the location and temperature of each vaccine shipment in hopes of preventing route deviations or product loss, so it is unclear how an error like this could occur. To be clear, no misconduct is suspected.

The national vaccine effort is logistically challenging and a huge undertaking. Unfortunately, these are not the nation’s first vaccines to be lost or wasted. KCHD has conducted a thorough review of its processes from start to finish, has put in place additional control measures, and continues to seek information from the state.

About Knox County Health Department:

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. As a chief health strategist for the community and



with more than 240 team members, KCHD's broad scope of work includes convening partners to improve community health, identifying community health threats, investigating disease outbreaks, conducting extensive outreach and education, preparing for public health emergencies, providing and connecting the public with medical care, enforcing food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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