

Seven Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard Facilities in DoD COVID-19 Vaccination Pilot



Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Thomas McCaffery speaks in a media briefing with Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Jonathan R. Hoffman (Right), and Army Lt. Gen. Ronald J. Place, Defense Health Agency director, about the Defense Department's phased, standardized, and coordinated strategy for distribution and administering COVID-19 vaccines, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Dec. 9, 2020. DoD / Air Force Staff Sgt. Brittany A. Chase

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Defense Department will start a COVID-19 vaccination pilot program at 16 facilities in the United States and overseas, as soon as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) grants emergency authorization, which is expected in the next few days, Pentagon officials said Dec 9.

Vaccination, which will be voluntary as long as the department is operating under an Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA, could start distributing almost 44,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine, the military's expected share of a limited initial production, "as early as next week for immediate use," Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Thomas McCaffery told reporters at a live-streamed Pentagon briefing.

The phase-in of other prioritized personnel at additional locations will continue until 60% of Defense Department personnel, about 11 million, have received the vaccine. By then, the department assumes vaccine production will have ramped up enough to permit unrestricted vaccination rates.

The first phase of voluntary vaccinations will target the coronavirus pandemic's first responders: Healthcare providers

and support staff, emergency services, and public safety personnel at Military Treatment Facilities. At first, only a very small percentage of those first vaccinations will go to critical national capabilities forces, such as the long range bombers, ballistic missile submarines and land-based missiles that make up the nuclear deterrence triad, officials said. In the meantime, mandatory counter-COVID-19 procedures such as wearing a face-covering, social distancing and quarantining before and after deployments will remain in force, they added.



The initial vaccine distribution sites. DoD

The 16 vaccination sites were picked because they had extra cold storage capability for the temperature-sensitive vaccines, sizeable local populations to vaccinate and large medical staffs, including an on-site immunization health specialist, said Director of the Defense Health Agency Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place.

The 13 vaccination sites in the continental United States include several Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard facilities: Navy Branch Health Clinic at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and the Naval Hospital Pensacola, both in Florida; the Alameda Health Services clinic at the Coast Guard Base Alameda, the Naval Medical Center at San Diego, the Naval Hospital at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, all in California; Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland and the U.S. Coast Guard Base Clinic, Portsmouth, Virginia.

The Pentagon announcement came eight days after a Navy reservist assigned to Navy Operational Support Center Akron, Ohio, died at a local hospital in Canton, Ohio from apparent complications associated with the coronavirus.

Builder 2ns Class Nathan Huff Bishop, 33, a Seabee, was only the second Sailor to succumb to COVID-19 despite widespread spikes in infection and death rates across the country. The first was Chief Petty Officer Robert Thacker Jr., 41, assigned

to USS Theodore Roosevelt, the first Navy vessel to suffer a COVID-19 outbreak at sea. He died in April at the U.S. Naval Hospital on Guam. As of Dec. 2, a total of 17,035 uniformed Navy personnel have tested positive for COVID-19 in 2020, 14,217 have recovered, nine remain hospitalized and two have died.