



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Governor Cuomo Signs Executive Order to Allow Pharmacists, Emts, and Dentists to Help Administer Tetanus Vaccines in Areas Affected by Hurricane Sandy

ANDREW J LANZA November 11, 2012

State and City Health Departments Advise People to Get a Tetanus Vaccine to Prevent Possible Infection Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that he has signed an Executive Order that will make it easier for people in areas affected by Hurricane Sandy to be vaccinated against tetanus to prevent infections that could result from exposure to tetanus bacteria during post-storm cleanup activities. Under the Order, pharmacists will be allowed to administer tetanus shots at their place of business, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and dentists will be able to assist city or county health departments in administering tetanus vaccines. "Protecting the health and safety of New Yorkers has been our main priority before, during and after Hurricane Sandy," Governor Cuomo said. "It is critical that people performing cleanup work after the storm take all necessary health precautions, including getting a tetanus vaccination if needed. The Order will help to make the process easier and faster for those in storm-affected areas." Due to the possibility of getting deep cuts or wounds when cleaning up debris, performing tasks that involve contact with soil or dirty materials, or making repairs to homes in the aftermath of the Hurricane Sandy, people need to guard against tetanus infection. Emergency responders, volunteers

and residents working on repair, construction and cleanup projects should check to make sure they have been immunized for tetanus within the last 10 years; if they are not up-to-date with the immunization or are unsure of the date of their last tetanus-containing vaccination, they should obtain a tetanus booster. The New York State Health Department and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene urge people to contact their primary health care provider first to receive a tetanus booster shot. If their primary care provider is not operating or they cannot get to their primary care provider's office, individuals should contact their local pharmacy or local health department to inquire about receiving a booster shot. Many pharmacies in the affected areas are ready to provide these vaccinations. Residents in New York City can call 311 to locate a vaccination site. This week, the State Health Department delivered a total of 5,000 doses of Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap) vaccine to the following counties: Suffolk County, 1,500 doses; Nassau County, 1,500 doses; Rockland County, 1,000 doses; and Westchester County 1,000 doses. New York City has both Tdap and Td (tetanus and diphtheria) vaccine on hand. Tetanus is an infection caused by bacteria that are present in dust, soil or manure, and enters the body through puncture wounds or cuts. After entering the body, the bacteria can produce toxins that can cause painful muscle contractions in the neck and abdomen, which are often characterized as "lockjaw", and can impair breathing. Left untreated, tetanus can be fatal. In addition to following safety guidelines to prevent injuries during cleanup or construction activities, all wounds and cuts should be washed thoroughly with soap and water. Medical attention should be sought for puncture wounds and lacerations. People who do sustain injuries and have not had a tetanus booster in the past five years should be revaccinated as part of treatment for the injury. As a result of widespread immunization, tetanus is a rare disease in the U.S. All children who attend day care in New York State, as well as those entering grades K-12 are required under State law to receive a series of immunizations for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. A booster vaccine (Tdap) is also required for children born

after January 1, 1994, who will be enrolled in grades 6-11. The vaccine may be effective after a person suffers a wound, but in some cases, tetanus immune globulin may be required. A tetanus booster in the form of a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria toxoid and acellular pertussis) vaccination is recommended and will provide protection against two additional diseases. A Td (tetanus and diphtheria) booster can also be used. Tdap is preferred over Td when available and will provide adults with protection against pertussis (whooping cough), which has seen a rise in the number of reported cases statewide this year. Additional information on tetanus is available at:

[http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/tetanus/fact\\_sheet.htm/](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/tetanus/fact_sheet.htm/).