

FSM Information Services

Press Release

FSM National Government Begins COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign for Frontline Workers; President Panuelo Takes Vaccine to Build Trust & Confidence

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), through its Enduring Partnership with the United States of America, has begun its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Following the arrival of the first 1,600 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on December 28th, 2020, the Government informally launched the campaign on December 31st, 2020 with the rollout proper to begin the week of January 4th, 2021 in the State of Pohnpei and the rest of the FSM the following week.

The FSM National Government expects another 8,200 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to arrive on or around Saturday, January 9th, 2021; it is the intention of the National Government to then ship the vaccines to Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap, via Caroline Islands Air and Pacific Mission Aviation, with the State Governments shortly following with the vaccine rollout in their jurisdiction.

The first priority group to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are frontline workers— such as healthcare workers and border control workers—followed by the elderly, and individuals with underlying medical conditions, which is the standard recommendation for prioritization from the U.S. CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO). Citizens should not expect that they will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine until such a time that all frontline workers have had the opportunity to receive it.

There is no live virus in the approved COVID-19 vaccines, and by extension any side effects do not mean that a patient has contracted COVID-19. Some acute side effects have been seen, including injection site soreness and a short-term fever that is gone in under 48 hours.

On December 31st, 2020, ten (10) individuals joined the launch event for the FSM's COVID-19 vaccination campaign, including His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, who took the vaccine on video to build public trust and confidence in its effectiveness.

President Panuelo has not reported any side effects. “No pain at the injection site—no side effects at all, I feel great and normal,” the President said in a January 4th, 2021 statement. Conversely, FSM Immunization Program Manager Carter Apaisam reported that the injection site was painful. “It is a

painful injection,” Mr. Apaisam said in a statement, “But it’s consistent with other efficacious vaccines, such as the influenza [flu] vaccine.”

As of January 4th, 2021, the FSM National Government has not stated an intention to make the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory, although both the Executive and Legislative Branches have fielded intra-governmental queries to this effect regarding whether such a mandatory requirement would be beneficial to the Nation and its citizens. President Panuelo has repeated that it is the goal of the Panuelo-George administration to seek a 100% vaccination rate.

Although the COVID-19 vaccine provides scientifically measurable and significant protection to individuals who receive it, it is not a “magic bullet”, it is not “literally a cure”, and it is not “a replacement for social distancing,” as some citizens have suggested through social media and radio programming. The FSM National Government continues to encourage the public to practice best preventive practices such as handwashing, mask wearing, and physical distancing between individuals, and such measures will become mandatory if and when COVID-19 arrives into the FSM.

It is the intention of the FSM National Government to continue cooperating with U.S. and other friends, allies, and development partners to ensure that all citizens who eventually wish to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may do so. In the spirit of this cooperation, the FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs has stated that the National Government expects to receive additional freezers and generators for the States of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, donated by the U.S. Government.

As of January 4th, 2021, the FSM remains COVID-19 free.

Watch President Panuelo receive the COVID-19 vaccine at these links:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt0JA-jD2dQ>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=218550006421540>
3. <https://twitter.com/FSMPIO/status/1345957239438200833>



Pictured Above: President Panuelo and Immunization Program Manager Apaisam pose after receiving their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: President Panuelo receives the COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: President Panuelo receives the COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: A first responder prepares the COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: Pohnpei State's Immunization Program Manager receives the COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: Mr. Bryan Mori, General Manager for United Airlines Inc. in Pohnpei State, receives the COVID-19 vaccine



Pictured Above: FSM National & Pohnpei State first responders pose at the conclusion of the COVID-19 vaccination launch event