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Garfield County Reports State's First Pediatric Flu Death

For Immediate Release

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RIFLE--Local public health officials today announced a Garfield County resident has died from influenza—the first pediatric flu death in the state reported this flu season.

The individual, whose name and age weren't disclosed, died Monday, Jan. 17, according to Mary Meisner, director of the Garfield County Public Health Department. Officials said the individual was an adolescent and had been treated at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction. According to health officials, the individual did not have underlying health conditions that might have contributed to death.

“The loss of any student is tragic, especially someone so young.” said Meisner. “Our thoughts and our prayers are with the family and friends of this child. A community grieves when one of its own is lost. This loss tragically reminds us that the flu is circulating and just how deadly it can be.”

Since Oct. 3, 2010, more than 135 people have been hospitalized with the flu across the state.

Ken Gershman, director of the Communicable Disease Program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said, “It's important people not let their guard down. They should get a flu vaccination to prevent the flu. The flu is circulating statewide and across the nation, and people must know they can protect themselves.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending everyone over 6 months of age get a flu vaccination.

Flu, or influenza, is a potentially serious illness that causes significant illness and death each year. The CDC reported 12,000 deaths occurred around the nation last flu season due to the 2009 H1N1 virus. Protection against H1N1, and two other circulating influenza strains, is contained in this season's flu vaccination.

Flu vaccine is available through local medical offices or at Garfield County Public Health offices in Rifle, 625-5200, or Glenwood Springs, 945-6614. More information about flu prevention can be obtained at www.flu.gov.