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\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

**Health officials identify 13 labs in state that received pathogenic influenza strain; All instructed to destroy remaining samples immediately**

CHEYENNE - State health officials said today that 13 labs in the state confirmed that they had received the H2N2 influenza virus. All the labs were instructed to destroy remaining samples, said Ginny Mahoney, Chief of Staff for the Wyoming Department of Health. She said 36 labs in total as of Friday had been contacted.

Mahoney said that State Public Health Laboratory staff is working to further identify possible recipients and contact clinicians, laboratorians, hospital administrators, and county public health officials to inform them of the progress in eliminating all samples of the pathogenic influenza strain in Wyoming.

"The health of the residents of Wyoming is our number one concern," Mahoney said. "Right now our priority is identifying all possible clinics in the state which may have received the samples and the health community has been wonderfully responsive."

Mahoney said epidemiologists at the department of health are monitoring the state for any spikes in influenza cases. As of Friday, she said there was no indication of increased flu activity.

Earlier this year, four independent private organizations - The College of American Pathologists, the American Association of Bioanalysts, the American College of Family Physicians and the American College of Physician Services sent one or more vials of Influenza A/H2N2 virus to approximately 6,400 labs in the U.S. Some labs in Wyoming also apparently received the samples as part of each lab's routine laboratory proficiency testing, although they were not marked as containing this pathogenic subtype, said Dr. Richard Harris, the Public Health Laboratory administrator for the Wyoming Department of Health.

H2N2 viruses have not circulated since 1967 and persons born after 1968 will have limited or no immunity against this subtype. Although Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said Wednesday that there is only a very small risk and historic data suggests that it is very unlikely that a laboratory worker will have been exposed, all parties are taking extreme precautions to prevent any potentially serious consequences.

The College of American Pathologists also sent these samples to laboratories in Canada, and 16 additional countries (Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, Chile, Brazil, France, Japan, Germany, Chile, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Taiwan).

The test kits were prepared by Meridian Bioscience Inc. of Cincinnati. The company made kits to help labs do proficiency testing, which involves identifying viruses to check a lab's quality controls or to acquire certification. Meridian ships the samples in bulk to the groups who in turn send them out to individual labs.

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For more information, please contact Ross Doman, public information officer, Wyoming Department of Health, (307) 631-0699.