

## Lee resident dies from H1N1 virus, authorities state

First swine flu related death reported locally

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H1N1 virus, or swine flu, has claimed the life of a 51-year-old Lee County man.

Though his name nor any personal information was available Wednesday, the man reported no pre-existing conditions or chronic illnesses prior to his death, according to the Lee County Health Department.

Health officials reported there are 42 people who have been confirmed to have swine flu in Lee, though they expect three more to test positive for the virus.

Following worldwide media coverage of the swine flu in early summer, the Lee County Health Department hopes that residents are still taking precautions to protect themselves and their families from the virus.

The man's death is unusual as early reports claimed that the young and the elderly are most susceptible to the effects of the H1N1 virus.

"People are still getting sick," said Jennifer James-Mesloh, spokeswoman for the Lee County Health Department. "This case is a very sober reminder that flu, regardless of whether it's seasonal or H1N1, can turn fatal. It's one of the things we need to be cogitative of."

She said the Centers for Disease Control has not raised the alert level pertaining to swine flu, nor has it recommended wearing surgical masks.

According to James-Mesloh, there have been 18 swine flu related deaths in Florida and 2,816 confirmed cases. In 2007, there were 75 deaths in Florida related to known strains of influenza.

She said influenza strains are normally less prevalent during the summer months, but the H1N1 strain has not been following this pattern.

"If you put this into perspective, I think it helps to give people a frame of reference," James-Mesloh said. "Not to belittle the tragedy of this, but I think people need to be aware that, typically, flu will wane over the summer. This year it has not been the case."

Whether additional information about the deceased man will become available is unknown.

James-Mesloh said autopsy results will remain confidential.

The Lee County Health Department is encouraging residents experiencing cough, sore throat, fever of 100 degrees or higher, diarrhea and vomiting to contact their physician and do not attend work or school.

Officials also stress proper hygiene.

For more information, call the Lee County Health Department at 332-9501 or visit: [www3.leegov.com/healthdept/](http://www3.leegov.com/healthdept/).

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