

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH TIPS FOR ATTENDING THE INAUGURATION

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Many visitors plan to travel to our nation's capital next week to join the festivities marking the inauguration of President-Elect Barack Obama. The Virginia Department of Health wants you to know how to ensure that if you plan to attend this historic event, your experience will be both healthy and enjoyable.

Early crowd estimates indicate that more than 1 million people could attend the Inaugural events. This likely will alter transportation conditions in the days leading up to and following the Jan. 20 inauguration.

“If these estimates prove accurate, Virginians planning to attend any inaugural events should be prepared to stand outside in large crowds for several hours and may encounter some delays getting home afterwards,” said Virginia Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA.

Use common sense and plan ahead. Check the weather forecast before your visit. Review information at www.vdh.virginia.gov so you know how to dress appropriately for wintry weather. Wear warm, comfortable shoes because you will have to walk long distances and stand for long periods of time, Dr. Remley said.

Participants and spectators should bring with them any necessary medications because there may be delays in getting to and from events. Take alcohol-based hand sanitizers or wipes to clean your hands and have snacks or cash on hand for food and water as attendees will not be allowed to bring backpacks or coolers into inauguration areas. (Prohibited items are posted at www.inauguration.dc.gov/spectator_info.asp.)

If your plans include driving, please be aware that traffic could be affected as far south as Fredericksburg, and possibly even to Richmond, and as far west as Winchester. Make sure you're prepared to spend time in your vehicle with a full tank of gas and have food and water on hand in your car.

There will be about 50 first aid stations available on the National Mall and in the Capitol area if you require medical assistance while attending inauguration events, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Smithsonian Institution museum buildings on the National Mall will be open for people to use as warming stations. Additional federal buildings will be open along the parade route so attendees can warm up.

Among the Web sites Virginians should use as they plan to attend the inauguration:

- Inauguration Day 2009, www.inauguration.dc.gov, provides information on inauguration festivities, spectator information and travel details. Sign up for emergency text alerts during Jan. 16-23 under “SERVICES.”
- Virginia Department of Health, www.vdh.virginia.gov, provides information on many health topics, including “covering your cough” and food safety.
- Virginia State Police Inauguration 2009, www.vsp.state.va.us/Inauguration_2009.shtm, is the main Virginia government Web site for traffic and transit information including details on road and bridge closures into Washington during inauguration events.

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