



**COMMANDER, NAVY REGION HAWAII/
NAVAL SURFACE GROUP
MIDDLE PACIFIC**

**COVID-19 AWARENESS
December 16, 2020**



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Region and MIDPAC Ohana,

For months we have been anticipating development of a COVID-19 vaccine. Last week we learned that a vaccine has been approved. Now this week we receive the welcome news that the first shipments of this game-changing weapon in the battle against COVID-19 have begun moving out to locations across the country. In a time when the rates of new virus cases world-wide are growing at an alarming pace, this is a major milestone and a most welcome early Christmas gift!

While we are anxious to begin the process of vaccinations, we need to be prepared to wait a little while longer before all of us can be inoculated against COVID-19. The Chief of Naval Operations released a message to the fleet this week that encourages all of us to maximize vaccinations when available while continuing those incredibly important mitigation measures. You can read his message here: <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Statements/display-statements/Article/2447865/cno-gilday-issues-a-message-to-the-fleet-on-the-covid-vaccine/>

For us here in Hawaii, USINDOPACOM has directed each service components to conduct the vaccination of all supported personnel and other eligible beneficiaries on a voluntary basis in a way that maintains military readiness and health protection. The order of people who get vaccinations first is derived from the data-driven, national prioritization to help ensure fair and equitable access to everyone, especially groups that could be affected by the pandemic at a higher rate than the general population. The first doses of the vaccine will be given to frontline health care workers and first responders, including emergency medical services personnel, security forces, and other essential personnel.

In the early days of the vaccination program, we should expect a limited supply as the producers of the vaccines continue to ramp up their production capability. Due to this, we should expect that the majority of military and civilian employees and their eligible family members may not have the opportunity to be vaccinated until late April or early May. This timeline may change as additional vaccine candidates are approved for use. I will ensure that you are kept informed as the plans become more formal.

Until that time, we must rely on the mitigation tools that have successfully gotten us to where we are today – the consistent use of appropriate face coverings, the practice of physical distancing, washing hands, following restriction of movement and most importantly, making smart choices to protect our safety and the safety of our shipmates, our loved ones, and our communities. Count on these measures staying in place at least until a large portion of the population has been vaccinated.

As always, take care of yourselves and your families.

V/r, Robb

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