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## Influenza Season Starts Soon

Kent, Wash. - **October 26, 2015**- Each fall and winter the Kent Fire Department RFA responds to many 9-1-1 calls where people report "flu-like symptoms". Here are some flu facts:

The influenza (flu) season typically begins in October or November and peaks during the months of January and February. Poor weather generally keeps people indoors and closer together where it is easier for the flu to spread.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, the flu is a virus that infects the respiratory system (nose, throat, lungs, etc.). Unlike many other viral infections, the flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people.

Each year, 5 - 20% of the U. S. population contracts the flu and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from seasonal flu-related complications. It is estimated that there are between 3,000 and 49,000 flu-associated deaths annually. 90% of those deaths are in people 65 years of age or older.

People at highest risk include:

- Older people - especially those with medical conditions such as heart disease
- Very young children
- Pregnant women
- Prior illness such as pneumonia, bronchitis, or ear infections

The symptoms of influenza include:

- Rapid onset
- Fever or feeling feverish/chills (not everyone has a fever who contract the flu)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Headaches

What can you do to prevent you or a family member from contracting this potentially deadly virus?

- Get a flu vaccination. This year's vaccine treats four different strains of the flu
- Avoid anyone who potentially has the flu and stay away from others if you are infected
- Wash your hands regularly
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces in the home (door knobs, phones, handles, etc.)
- Cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or tissue when coughing or sneezing

You can learn more about influenza and other health-related topics at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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