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VA flies COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans in rural Montana

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) flew doses of the Moderna vaccine to the Montana VA Health Care System (MTVAHCS) last week, as part of a new pilot program providing vaccines to Veterans living in rural parts of the country.

Chosen as the initial site for the pilot, MTVAHCS provided 240 Veterans in Havre, Montana with the vaccine.

Montana was selected due to size and rurality. It is the country's fourth largest state and its mountainous terrain makes for difficult driving conditions during the winter. The facility arranged transportation via air charter to deliver the vaccines.

"The delivery of the Moderna vaccine to Havre, Montana gives solace knowing we are helping protect rural Montana Veterans from COVID-19," said VA Acting Secretary Dat Tran. "The vaccines were flown in special plug-in coolers from the ultracold, on-site freezer at Fort Harrison to Havre."

This offers Veterans enrolled in VA health care living in Havre the opportunity to receive the vaccine.

"MTVAHCS was fortunate to administer COVID-19 vaccines to Havre-area Veterans just one day after opening our newly expanded clinic," said facility director Judy Hayman, M.D.

"Montana's Veterans are one step closer to being protected from the coronavirus," said Montana Senator and Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Jon Tester. "Working with VA leadership and folks on the ground, to ensure rural Veterans have access to COVID-19 vaccines administered by a highly-capable team of VA medical professionals, validates the department's efforts to make the vaccine available to all Veterans across the nation. This first round of vaccines will help save lives by effectively slowing the spread of the coronavirus in our rural communities — a key step in ending the ongoing pandemic and getting Montana's economy back on track."

MTVAHCS scheduled appointments with eligible enrolled Veterans based on risk assessments. The vaccines are free and require two doses given 28 days apart. Veterans were scheduled for their second dose at their first appointment. All Veterans who received a vaccine will be closely monitored for reactions, side effects or adverse events.

VA's goal is to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to all Veterans and employees who elect to be vaccinated. As vaccine supplies increase, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations.

Veterans and their caregivers can get the latest information and sign up to receive updates on [VA's COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#).

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