

Here’s how people in the Delta are working to overcome COVID-19 vaccine transportation barriers

Mississippi Today
by Kelsey Davis Betz
ITTA BENA — When the pandemic first hit and halted most university operations, faculty at Mississippi Valley State University found themselves with a fleet of unused transit buses that usually took students to and from class. The unlikely scenario became an opportunity to innovate, though, especially once vaccines started to become available in Mississippi. “There are segments of our community that are underserved as far as having transportation. Some people don’t have transportation, period. Therefore, we thought this would be a good opportunity for us to provide something to help those citizens out, especially if people want to get the vaccine,” said Sonji Foster, project director for MVSU mass transit. So the mass transit opera-

tion at MVSU pivoted. Instead of sitting vacant while students attended virtual classes, transit buses started picking people up who needed a ride and taking them to designated vaccine locations. The concept was simple: once a person made an appointment to get the vaccine, they could call MVSU and arrange a ride. As long as the riders gave the transit system 24 hours notice, a transit bus would come pick the person up at whatever location they specified and bring them back home afterward. In Bolivar County, community activist Pam Chatman has been organizing similar efforts. Instead of utilizing university transit systems, Chatman has worked with local transportation agencies and philanthropic groups to arrange vaccination transportation for people who need it.

Chatman advertises around the community that this service is available, which includes what number to call to get a ride. Once a person calls the number to the transportation agency and tells them they need a ride to get vaccinated, that ride is arranged at no cost to the rider. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi made an initial contribution of \$2,500 to this effort, which has helped fund the free rides. While the Delta is not short on people working to solve the vaccination transportation issue, the barriers those organizers face are significant. Part of the challenge is getting the word out. Because broadband internet and computer access is scarce in the Delta, people rely on churches, community groups and word of mouth to spread information.

But with COVID-19 causing church services to go virtual and group gatherings to diminish, information sharing has slowed. “A huge barrier is that people seem to not know that we’re doing this. Places where people would normally gather to get the word out, those places are not gathering anymore right now,” Foster said. To her point, about 25 people have taken advantage of MSVU’s transit system since the opportunity was first announced in March.

Chatman agreed that information access has been one of the barriers with helping people take advantage of the vaccination transportation system and with setting up appointments to get vaccinated at all. “That’s why I say it’s so important that churches and community organizations get involved in spreading the word because there’s a lot of parts of Mississippi rural that do not have the computers or broadband to schedule an appointment,” Chatman said.

Meanwhile, Mississippi’s vaccination rate has plummeted since peaking in late February.

MSDH reported on Wednesday, May 19, that 999,042 people in Mississippi — over 33% of the state’s population — have received at least their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Nearly 870,000 people have been fully inoculated since the state began distributing vaccines in December.

Mississippi continues to rank last in the nation in the share of its population that has been vaccinated, and the state’s vaccination rate has dropped nearly 75% from its peak in late February. Fewer than 1,000 Mississippians ages 12-15 received their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine in the week following its approval for that age group.

“We know that there is an issue, there is a concern,” Chatman said about vaccination access. “And so, it’s up to us as Mississippians to try all of us to help these people in rural areas.”


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Do you need a free ride to get your COVID-19 vaccination? Here’s who to call.

The Vaccination Transportation Initiative

Phone Number: 214-302-9445

Who it serves: Anyone in the Delta

How it works: After you make an appointment to get vaccinated, call this number to arrange your ride. Give them 24 hours notice before you need the ride. They will come pick you up, take you to get your vaccine, and bring you home afterward.

Mississippi Valley State University

Phone Number: 214-302-9445

Who it serves: Anyone in Leflore, Sunflower, Washington, Holmes, Humphreys, Carroll, Tallahatchie or Grenada counties.

How it works: After you make an appointment to get vaccinated, call this number to arrange your ride. Give them 24 hours notice before you need the ride. A MSVU transportation bus will come pick you up, take you to get your vaccine, and bring you home afterward.

Mississippi Department of Transportation

Phone Number: 1-866-813-3616

Who it serves: Anyone in Mississippi

How it works: When contacting the toll-free number, the caller will be able to select their scheduled vaccination site from a menu of six options: Delta Area, Golden Triangle Area, Northeast Area, Central Area, Southern Area and Southwest Area. Once the region is selected, the caller will be connected to the designated call center for the ride to be scheduled within 24-48 hours. For evening and weekend calls, every effort will be made to confirm scheduled trips by the next business day.

Want to stay updated about COVID-19 vaccination news in Mississippi? Text "Vaccine" to 1-844-626-5588 to receive news updates powered by Mississippi Today.

Happy Birthday

May 27 - Chris McCleskey, Reid Sumrall, Trey Johnson, Micah Smith, Justin Slawson, Barbara Edge
May 28 - Emily Murphree, Katherine Riley, Johnny Donelson, Matthew

Watson, Walker Wentworth
May 29 - Clifton Atkinson, Weston Killebrew
May 30 - Terry Wynne, Chloe Word, Jeanette Davis, April Marrone, Brittany Edwards, Portia Riley, Margaret Roberts

May 31 - Renee Wynne, LaTrice Porter, Lucille Smith, Eryca Edwards, B. Ledbatter, Ruby Moore, June Durff, Mickey Chisolm, William Powell
June 1 - Amber Ratliff King, Gabrielle Lawson,

Debra Williams
June 2 - Harold Hammett, Trace Harrell, Wyatt Allen, Lucas Allen, Samantha Shuler, Adam Hester, Ginger Perry, Jay McBride, Veronique Tooles, Sharon Smart

2020 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report
City of Durant
PWS ID# 0260006
May 2021

We are pleased to present to you this year's Annual Drinking Water Quality Report. This report is a snapshot of last year's water quality. Included are details about from where your water comes, what it contains, and how it compares to standards set by regulatory agencies. Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. We want you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment process and protect our water resources. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water and to providing you with this information, because informed customers are our best allies. Our water source is groundwater. Our wells draw from the Meridian Upper Wilcox aquifer.

A Source Water Assessment has been completed for our public water system to determine the overall susceptibility of the drinking water supply and to identify potential sources of contamination. The general susceptibility rankings assigned to each well of this system are provided immediately below. A report containing detailed information on how the susceptibility determinations were made has been furnished to our public water supply and is available upon request. The wells for The City of Durant have received moderate to higher susceptibility rankings to contamination.

If you have any questions about this report or concerning your water, please contact Mayor Henry Robinson at 662.653-3221. We want our valued customers to be informed about their water utility. If you want to learn more, please attend any of our regularly scheduled meetings. They are held at 6:30 P.M. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at city hall.

We routinely monitor for over 150 contaminants in your drinking water according to Federal and State laws. The table below lists all the drinking water contaminants that we detected in the last round of sampling for the particular contaminant group. Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this table is from testing done January 1 through December 31, (2020). As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. All drinking water, including bottled water may be reasonably expected to contain at least small amounts of some constituents. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk

In this table you will find many terms and abbreviations you might not be familiar with. To help you better understand these terms we've provided the following definitions:

Parts per million (ppm) or Milligrams per liter (mg/L) - One part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or a single penny in \$10,000.

Parts per billion (ppb) or Micrograms per liter (ug/L) - One part per billion corresponds to one minute in 2,000 years, or a single penny in \$10,000,000.

Action Level (AL) - The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) - The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) - The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

TEST RESULTS							
Inorganic Contaminants							
Contaminant (units)	Sample Date	MCL Violation Y/N	Your Water	Range Low High	MCLG	MCL	Likely Source of Contamination
Barium (ppm)	*2018	N	0.0758	NO RANGE	2	2	Discharge of drilling wastes; discharge from metal refineries; erosion of natural deposits
Copper (ppm) (90 th percentile)	2020	N	0.02	0	AL=1.3		Corrosion of household plumbing systems; erosion of natural deposits; leaching from wood preservatives
Lead (ppb) (90 th percentile)	2020	N	1.9 ^a	0	AL=15		Corrosion of household plumbing systems, erosion of natural deposits
Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Contaminants							
Contaminant (units)	Sample Date	MCL Violation Y/N	Your Water	Range of detects	MCLG/MCL		Likely Source of Contamination
TTHM (ppb) [Total Trihalomethanes]	2020	N	3.23	No Range	0 / 80		By-product of drinking water chlorination
HAAs (ppb) [Total Haloacetic Acids]	2020	N	12	No Range	0 / 60		By-product of drinking water chlorination
Chlorine (ppm)	2020	N	1.20	1.11-1.22	0 / MRDL =4		Water additive used to control microbes
Unregulated Contaminants							
Contaminant (units)	Sample Date	MCL Violation Y/N	Your Water	Range Low High	MCLG	MCL	Likely Source of Contamination
Sodium (ppb)	*2019	N	93000	No Range	None	None	Road Salt, Water treatment Chemicals, Water Softeners and Sewage Effluents

**Most Recent Sample. No sample required for 2020.*

Unregulated contaminants are those for which EPA has not established drinking water standards. The purpose of unregulated contaminant monitoring is to assist EPA in determining the occurrence of unregulated contaminants in drinking water and whether future regulations are warranted.

To comply with the “Regulation Governing Fluoridation of Community Water Supplies”, MS0260006 is required to report certain results pertaining to fluoridation of our water system. The number of months in the previous calendar year in which average fluoride sample results were within the optimal range of 0.6-1.2 was 0. The percentage of fluoride samples collected in the previous calendar year that was within the optimal range of 0.6-1.2 was 0%.

We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants monthly. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether our drinking water meets health standards. To ensure systems complete all monitoring requirements, MSDH now notifies systems of any samples prior to the end of the monitoring period.

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The City of Durant is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>. The Mississippi State Department of Health Public Laboratory offers lead testing for \$10 per sample. Please contact 601.576.7582 if you wish to have your water tested.

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbiological contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

The City of Durant works around the clock to provide top quality water to every tap. We ask that all our customers help us protect our water sources, which are the heart of our community, our way of life and our children's future.