



# Health Alert Network Message 21-23: Updated Morris & Dickson Pfizer Receiving and Handling Guidelines

**Origination Date:**  
March 10, 2021

**Revision Dates (List All Revision Dates):**

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## State of Louisiana

Department of Health  
Office of Public Health

DATE: March 10, 2021

TO: Louisiana COVID-19 Vaccination Providers

FROM: Stacy Hall, RN MSN  
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SUBJECT: **UPDATED-Morris & Dickson Pfizer Storage & Handling Guidelines**

On February 25, 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it is allowing undiluted frozen vials of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to be transported and stored at conventional temperatures commonly found in pharmaceutical freezers (-25°C to -15°C; -13°F to 5°F) for a period of two weeks. This reflects an alternative to the recommended storage of undiluted vials in an ultra-low temperature freezer between -80°C to -60°C or for just 5 days refrigerated.

Beginning March 15, 2021, Louisiana’s Vaccine Re-distributor, **Morris and Dickson (M&D)**, will begin shipping **prime (first or initial) Doses of Pfizer Vaccine at the frozen temperature (-25C to -15C; -13F to 5F)**. This will allow sites receiving Pfizer from M&D to now have 18 days to use the vaccine before expiration (13 days Frozen [accounting for one day of transport] and then an additional five days refrigerated). This does not change the state’s urgency policy in vaccine usage. **All prime (first) doses, whether direct shipped or received via Morris and Dickson, continue to need to be utilized within seven days of receipt.**

**Undiluted vials maybe stored at the following temperature ranges:**

- Between -80°C and -60°C (-112°F to -76°F) until the expiration date
- Between -25°C and -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) for up to two weeks
  - Note: These temperatures are within the appropriate range for routinely recommended vaccines, BUT the temperature range for this vaccine is tighter. If storing the vaccine in a freezer with

routinely recommended vaccines, carefully adjust the freezer temperature to the correct temperature range for this vaccine.

- Between 2°C and 8°C (35°F to 46°F) for up to 120 hours (5 days)

#### **Additional Information**

- This alternative storage option will not change the current direct shipping procedures for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine
- Direct Ship Orders will still be sent in the thermal shipping containers with dry ice which maintain a temperature range of -90°C to -60°C. Pfizer thermal shipping containers are qualified to maintain ultralow temperatures only; they cannot be used to store/transport vaccine at other temperatures.
- Once received, vials may be stored or transported at the frozen temperature range of -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) for a period of two weeks.
- Frozen vials stored or transported at -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) may be returned **one time** to the recommended storage condition of -80°C to -60°C (-112°F to -76°F). This includes vials that are held up to two weeks at -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F), and in risk of not being used in time. **(Note: This means vials received from Morris and Dickson may now be transferred to an ultra-low temperature Freezer if they have remained frozen and are within the initial 14 day window.)**
- Any time that the vials are stored or transported at -25°C to -15°C count against the two-week limit.
  - Redistributed vials transported at -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) can either be returned to -80°C to -60°C (-112°F to -76°F) and used by the expiration date or maintained at -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F) and used within two weeks. Time in transit counts as part of the two-week time limit.
- Total cumulative time the vials are stored at -25°C to -15°C should be tracked and should not exceed two weeks. CDC is updating Pfizer Beyond-Use Date Labels to track this two-week timeframe.
- These changes are further outlined in the [FDA's Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers Administering Vaccine \(Vaccination Providers\)](#)