

How might mass COVID vaccinations work? Louisiana sets up drive-through flu vaccine effort as a test

Getting all those shots into arms will be a monumental task. Shreveport, Louisiana, is getting ready now.

The city recently completed a test run, one of about a dozen across the state. Health officials there organized the community's first-ever drive-thru flu shot clinic in the massive parking lot of the Louisiana state fairgrounds.

Drivers rolled down their windows and rolled up their sleeves as they pulled up to tents for the largest vaccination event the regional health department has ever hosted. Cheerful and fast-working nurses jabbed them with vaccines. Within about five minutes, people were on their way, exiting the parking lot while passing a row of food stands selling corn dogs, roasted nuts and lemonade.

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In the near future, that's just the way officials hope it will go for a Covid-19 vaccine. A poor state that's seen its share of hurricanes, floods and tornadoes, Louisiana is trying to get out front of the challenge. The state's health department decided early on to run test clinics in each of its nine public-health regions, using this winter's flu shot as practice to eventually distribute millions of Covid-19 vaccine doses.

"Unlike with testing, we have the luxury to have four to five months to plan," said Frank Welch, a doctor who is Louisiana's immunization director.

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