



**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Stephen Clark  
Gerald R. Ford International Airport, 616.460.0718  
or  
Mary Ann Sabo  
Sabo PR, 616.485.1432

## **First Domestic Shipment of Lifesaving COVID-19 Vaccine Departs Ford Airport Sunday**

**Grand Rapids, Michigan, December 13, 2020** – The first cargo plane carrying Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine for domestic use departed from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport at 11 a.m. today – the first of tens of thousands of shipments that will deliver the life-saving vaccine to locations around the nation and then the world.

After the FDA authorized the vaccine for emergency use, the first doses arrived via truck from Pfizer’s headquarters in Portage at 9:45 a.m. The mood was jubilant on the airfield as crews began loading the Airbus A300 in preparation for the one hour and 30-minute flight to Memphis, Tennessee.

Transportation plays a key role in distributing the vaccine, which must be kept at negative 94 Fahrenheit. A wide-body aircraft, the Airbus A300 can carry up to 105,000 pounds of cargo.

Photos and videos can be accessed through this [link](#).

“This is a big day for West Michigan and a historic milestone for the world that marks the beginning of the end to the global pandemic,” said Torrance Richardson, president and CEO of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. “The Ford Airport is honored to play a key role in ensuring the vaccine gets into the hands of healthcare professionals around the country.

“Our continuing investment in infrastructure has ensured we are able to meet the demands of the aggressive delivery schedule. We train and prepare for this all year long to ensure we are ready for whatever challenges come our way.”

The Ford Airport is the closest commercial airport to Pfizer’s Kalamazoo manufacturing operations with the infrastructure needed to support the transportation process. Ford Airport has a 10,000-foot runway, dedicated cargo facility, appropriate ground support and the capacity needed to stage and transport billions of doses of the vaccine.

Talks continue with four global carriers that have expressed interest in transporting the widely anticipated vaccine, which is seen as the beginning of the end of the global pandemic.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Ford Airport has taken a number of steps to make its guest experience as safe and comfortable as possible through its Fly Safe. Fly Ford. campaign. It also recently announced it is serving as a COVID-19 drive-up test site for guests and the community.

### **About the Ford Airport**

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is the second busiest airport in Michigan, serving business and leisure travelers with nonstop and connecting flights on six airlines. The Ford Airport is managed

and operated by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. For more information, visit [www.flyford.org](http://www.flyford.org) or follow the airport on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @FlyGRFord.

# # #