

# Prevent. Educate. Prepare.

## Your Influenza Pandemic Preparation Partner

Proper planning for a flu pandemic will allow you to better protect your employees and ultimately lessen the impact of a pandemic on society and the economy. With these tools, our agency can deliver resources that you need to effectively educate and prepare your workplace for a flu pandemic.

## Our Tools for Your Success

Our agency can provide custom communications materials for you and your employees to assist in educating, understanding and preparing for a flu pandemic.

### Compliance

Accurate and timely public health information is critical in the event of a pandemic. This legislative brief answers basic questions about workplace preparation strategies for the 2009 H1N1 flu virus to help keep you informed.

### Employee Preparedness

Our Planning for a Flu Pandemic in the Workplace template helps you prepare for absenteeism, changes in patterns of commerce and possible interrupted supply and delivery due to the flu. This template also includes strategies for reducing the risk of exposure in the workplace.

### Custom Employee Communications

You can speak to your employees through these educational materials that meet your needs this flu season. They include posters, payroll stuffers, communications flyers and newsletters.

The collage features several key documents:

- Legislative Brief: ADA-Compliant Employer Preparedness for the H1N1 Flu Virus** - A document explaining the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for employers during a pandemic.
- H1N1 Vaccine: Everything you need to know** - A guide providing information on the availability, effectiveness, and safety of the H1N1 vaccine.
- Facing a Communicable Disease in the Workplace** - A document detailing the responsibilities of employers and employees in the event of a workplace outbreak.
- Frequently Asked Questions** - A Q&A section addressing common concerns about workplace safety and disability rights.
- Workplace Policy** - A template for creating a formal workplace policy regarding communicable diseases.
- Travel and Quarantine Policies** - Guidelines for managing employee travel during a pandemic.

## Stay Virtually Connected

We deliver documents on command, all from the convenience of your unique Web-based client portal. These tools allow you to access and share valuable resources, including compliance information, payroll stuffers and newsletters.



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# H1N1 Vaccine

Novel H1N1 (commonly referred to as swine flu) is still a threat this flu season, but scientists have worked hard to develop a vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved this vaccine and government officials expect it to become available by mid-October.

## How is it Spread?

Novel H1N1 is spread in the same way as seasonal flu, from person to person, generally through coughing or sneezing. A person can also become infected by touching a surface with flu viruses on it and then touching his/her nose or mouth.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of H1N1 flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting. Though most infected people have recovered without medical treatment, some hospitalizations and deaths have occurred.

Watch for these warning signs that require emergency medical care:

- *Children:* fast breathing; bluish or gray skin color; severe vomiting; not waking up or interacting; severe irritability; flu-like symptoms improve but then return.
- *Adults:* difficulty breathing; pain or pressure in chest or

abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; flu-like symptoms improve but then return.

## Vaccination

The H1N1 vaccine was approved by the FDA, and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced that she expects the vaccine to become available mid-October (with very limited supplies available earlier that month). Though experts had previously predicted the necessity for two H1N1 vaccination doses, clinical trials are now showing that the vaccine protects with only one dose for adults. It is likely that children under 10 will still need two doses, though. The vaccine will be available either as a nasal spray or an injection

However, this is in addition to the normal seasonal flu shot, so adults will need two separate shots to protect against both seasonal and novel H1N1 flu (children under 10 will need three total shots).

## Vaccine Availability

It is projected that there will be limited quantities of the vaccine

initially (though officials expect that eventually there will be enough vaccine available for everyone who wants it). Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends these priority groups for receiving the vaccination first:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than six months old
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- Persons between six months and 24 years old
- Persons ages 25-64 who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 due to chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems



## Did you know...?

People above the age of 65 seem to have some immunity to the novel H1N1 flu virus, with current studies indicating that the risk of infection among persons age 65 and older is less than the risk for younger age groups.

# All You Need to Know about H1N1 Flu

## Your Questions Answered

A new kind of flu caused by the influenza A (H1N1) virus has recently emerged. Human cases of the H1N1 flu and associated deaths have been identified in both the United States and internationally.

### What is H1N1?

H1N1 is a respiratory disease that causes a regular outbreak in pigs. Humans do not normally get H1N1, yet infections can occur, and have now been reported and spread from person to person.

### Is H1N1 Contagious?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that H1N1 is contagious in humans. In fact, sick individuals may be able to infect others beginning one day before their symptoms develop and up to seven days or more after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know that you are sick, as well as while you are still battling the virus.

### Can You Get H1N1 from Eating Pork?

Absolutely not. But, as you probably know, you need to cook pork thoroughly to avoid getting other diseases that can

be spread by undercooked meat.

### Are there Medications to Treat H1N1?

There are two medications available, and are most effective when they are used within two days of showing symptoms.

### What Can You do to Protect Yourself Against H1N1?

A vaccine was recently approved by the FDA and will be available for distribution in October. In addition, there are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing. Throw the tissue away after using it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after sneezing and coughing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with

people who are ill.

- If you do become sick with H1N1, stay home from work or school and limit your contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### What Should You Do if You Get Sick?

If you live in areas where H1N1 has been identified and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms – fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea and vomiting or diarrhea – contact your health care provider immediately. He/she will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is necessary.

For more information on H1N1, visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) or call (800) 232-4636.



### If You are Taking a Trip...

to an area where H1N1 cases have been reported, pay close attention to announcements from the local government, follow all local public health guidelines and wash your hands often with soap and water.



## H1N1 Flu – Steps to Prevent Transmission

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person to person through the coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- If you get sick, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

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# Planning for a Flu Pandemic in the Workplace

Benefits and insurance issues important to you - brought to you by the insurance specialists at Payne Financial Group Inc.



In the event of an influenza pandemic, employers will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as in limiting the impact on the economy and society. Employers will likely experience employee absences, changes in patterns of commerce and interrupted supply and delivery schedules. Proper planning will allow employers in the public and private sectors to better protect their employees and lessen the impact of a pandemic on society and the economy. As stated in the President's National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, all stakeholders must plan and be prepared.

## The Differences between Seasonal, Pandemic, Swine and Avian Influenza

*Seasonal Influenza* refers to the periodic outbreaks of respiratory illness in the fall and winter in the United States. Outbreaks are typically limited; most people have some immunity to the circulating strain of the virus. A vaccine is prepared in advance of the seasonal influenza; it is designed to match the influenza viruses most likely to be circulating in the community. Employees living abroad and international business travelers should note that other geographic areas (for example, the Southern Hemisphere) have different influenza seasons which may require different vaccines.

*Pandemic Influenza* refers to a worldwide outbreak of influenza among people when a new strain of the virus emerges that has the ability to infect humans and to spread from person to person. Pandemics have occurred throughout history; the most recent scare involved swine flu (see below). It is impossible to predict when the next pandemic will occur or whether it will be mild or severe, so it pays to be prepared.

*H1N1 Influenza* is a respiratory disease that causes a regular outbreak in pigs, but until recently, it was not common in humans. However, in April 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 5 – inferring an imminent pandemic – in response to an intensifying outbreak throughout the world.

*Avian Influenza (AI)* – also known as the bird flu – is caused by a virus that infects wild birds and domestic poultry. Some forms of the avian influenza are worse than others. Avian influenza viruses are generally divided into two groups: low pathogenic avian influenza (occurs naturally in birds and poses little threat to human health) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (can cross species and be deadly to humans).

## Severe Pandemic Influenza and the Workplace

Unlike natural disasters or terrorist events, an influenza pandemic will be widespread, affecting multiple areas of the United States and other countries at the same time. A pandemic will also be an extended event, with multiple waves of outbreaks in the same geographic area; each outbreak could last from 6 to 8 weeks. Waves of outbreaks may occur over a year or more. Your workplace will likely experience:

- Absenteeism - A pandemic could affect as many as 40 percent of the workforce during periods of peak influenza illness. Employees could be absent because they are sick, must care for sick family members or for children if schools or day care centers are closed, are afraid to come to work, or the employer might not be notified that the employee has died.
- Change in patterns of commerce - During a pandemic, consumer demand for items related to infection control is likely to increase dramatically, while consumer interest in other goods may decline. Consumers may also change the ways in which they shop as a result of the pandemic. Consumers may try to shop at off-peak hours to reduce contact with other people, show increased interest in home delivery services, or prefer other options, such as drive-through service, to reduce person-to-person contact.

- Interrupted supply/delivery - Shipments of items from those geographic areas severely affected by the pandemic may be delayed or cancelled.

### **Who Should Plan for a Pandemic?**

To reduce the impact of a pandemic on your operations, employees, customers and the general public, it is important for all businesses and organizations to begin continuity planning for a pandemic now. Lack of continuity planning can result in a cascade of failures as employers attempt to address challenges of a pandemic with insufficient resources, as well as employees who might not be adequately trained in the jobs they will be asked to perform. Proper planning will allow employers to better protect their employees and prepare for changing patterns of commerce and potential disruptions in supplies or services. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a checklist for businesses to identify important activities they can do to prepare for influenza pandemic emergencies. [See pages 13 through 16 for this checklist.](#)

The U.S. government has placed a special emphasis on supporting pandemic influenza planning for public and private sector businesses deemed to be critical industries and key resource (CI/KR). Critical infrastructures are the thirteen sectors that provide the production of essential goods and services, interconnectedness and operability, public safety, and security which contribute to a strong national defense and thriving economy. Key resources are facilities, sites, and groups of organized people whose destruction could cause large-scale injury, death, or destruction of property and/or profoundly damage our national prestige and confidence. With 85 percent of the nation's critical infrastructure in the hands of the private sector, the business community plays a vital role in ensuring national pandemic preparedness and response.

Additional guidance for CI/KR business is available at:

[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/CIKRpandemicInfluenzaGuide.pdf](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/CIKRpandemicInfluenzaGuide.pdf).

### **How Influenza Can Spread Between People?**

Influenza is thought to be primarily spread through large droplets (droplet transmission) that directly come in contact with the nose, mouth or eyes. These droplets are produced when infected people cough, sneeze or talk, sending the relatively large infectious droplets and very small sprays (aerosols) into the air and into contact with other people nearby. Large droplets can only travel a limited range; therefore, people should limit close contact (within 6 feet) with others when possible. To a lesser degree, human influenza is spread by touching objects contaminated with influenza viruses and then transferring the infected material from the hands to the nose, mouth or eyes. Influenza may also be spread by very small infectious particles (aerosols) traveling in the air. The contribution of each route of exposure to influenza transmission is uncertain at this time and may vary based upon the characteristics of the influenza strain.

### **Classifying Employee Exposure to Pandemic Influenza at Work**

Employee risks of occupational exposure to influenza during a pandemic may fluctuate from very high to high, medium, or lower (caution) risk. The level of risk depends in part on whether or not jobs require close proximity to people potentially infected with the pandemic influenza virus, or whether they are required to have either repeated or extended contact with known or suspected sources of pandemic influenza virus such as coworkers, the general public, outpatients, school children or other such individuals or groups.

Very high exposure risk occupations are those with high potential exposure to high concentrations of known or suspected sources of pandemic influenza during specific medical or laboratory procedures.

- High exposure risk occupations are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of pandemic influenza virus.
- Medium exposure risk occupations include jobs that require frequent, close contact (within 6 feet) exposures to known or suspected sources of pandemic influenza virus such as coworkers, the general public, outpatients, school children or other such individuals or groups.
- Lower exposure risk (caution) occupations are those that do not require contact with people known to be infected with the pandemic virus, nor frequent close contact (within 6 feet) with the public. Even at lower risk levels, however, employers should be cautious and develop preparedness plans to minimize employee infections.

Employers of critical infrastructure and key resource employees (such as law enforcement, emergency response, or public utility employees) may consider upgrading protective measures for these employees beyond what would be suggested by their exposure risk. This is due to the necessity of such services for the functioning of society, as well as the potential difficulties in replacing them during a pandemic (for example, due to extensive training or licensing requirements). To help employers determine appropriate work practices and precautions, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) has divided workplaces and work operations into four risk zones, according to the likelihood of employees' occupational exposure to pandemic influenza. We show these zones in the shape of a pyramid to represent how the risk will likely be distributed. The vast majority of American workplaces are likely to be in the medium exposure risk or lower exposure risk (caution) groups.

## **Maintaining Operations During a Pandemic**

As an employer, you have an important role in protecting employee health and safety, and limiting the impact of an influenza pandemic. It is important to work with community planners to integrate your pandemic plan into local and state planning, particularly if your operations are part of the nation's critical infrastructure or key resources. Integration with local community planners will allow you to access resources and information promptly to maintain operations and keep your employees safe.

### *Develop a Disaster Plan*

- Be aware of and review federal, state and local health department pandemic influenza plans. Incorporate appropriate actions from these plans into workplace disaster plans.
- Prepare and plan for operations with a reduced workforce.
- Work with your suppliers to ensure that you can continue to operate and provide services.
- Develop a sick leave policy that does not penalize sick employees, thereby encouraging employees who have influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, or upset stomach) to stay home so that they do not infect other employees. Recognize that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.
- Identify possible exposure and health risks to your employees. Are employees potentially in contact with people with influenza such as in a hospital or clinic? Are your employees expected to have a lot of contact with the general public?
- Minimize exposure to fellow employees or the public. For example, will more of your employees work from home? This may require enhancement of technology and communications equipment.
- Identify business-essential positions and people required to sustain business-necessary functions and operations. Prepare to cross-train or develop ways to function in the absence of these positions. It is recommended that employers train three or more employees to be able to sustain business-necessary functions and operations, and communicate the expectation for available employees to perform these functions if needed during a pandemic.
- Plan for downsizing services but also anticipate any scenario which may require a surge in your services.
- Recognize that, in the course of normal daily life, all employees will have non-occupational risk factors at home and in community settings that should be reduced to the extent possible. Some employees will also have individual risk factors that should be considered by employers as they plan how the organization will respond to a potential pandemic (e.g., immune-compromised individuals and pregnant women).
- Stockpile items such as soap, tissue, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and recommended personal protective equipment. When stockpiling items, be aware of each product's shelf life and storage conditions (e.g., avoid areas that are damp or have temperature extremes) and incorporate product rotation (e.g., consume oldest supplies first) into your stockpile management program.
- Make sure that your disaster plan protects and supports your employees, customers and the general public. Be aware of your employees' concerns about pay, leave, safety and health. Informed employees who feel safe at work are less likely to be absent.

- Develop policies and practices that distance employees from each other, customers and the general public. Consider practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees, such as e-mail, websites and teleconferences. Policies and practices that allow employees to work from home or to stagger their work shifts may be important as absenteeism rises.
- Organize and identify a central team of people or focal point to serve as a communication source so that your employees and customers can have accurate information during the crisis.
- Work with your employees and their union(s) to address leave, pay, transportation, travel, childcare, absence and other human resource issues.
- Provide your employees and customers in your workplace with easy access to infection control supplies, such as soap, hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (such as gloves or surgical masks), tissues, and office cleaning supplies.
- Provide training, education and informational material about business-essential job functions and employee health and safety, including proper hygiene practices and the use of any personal protective equipment to be used in the workplace. Be sure that informational material is available in a usable format for individuals with sensory disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. Encourage employees to take care of their health by eating right, getting plenty of rest and getting a seasonal flu vaccination.
- Work with your insurance companies and state and local health agencies to provide information to employees and customers about medical care in the event of a pandemic.
- Assist employees in managing additional stressors related to the pandemic. These are likely to include distress related to personal or family illness, life disruption, grief that is related to loss of family, friends or coworkers, loss of routine support systems, and similar challenges. Assuring timely and accurate communication will also be important throughout the duration of the pandemic in decreasing fear or worry. Employers should provide opportunities for support, counseling, and mental health assessment and referral should these be necessary. If present, Employee Assistance Programs can offer training and provide resources and other guidance on mental health and resiliency before and during a pandemic.

### *Protect Employees and Customers*

Educate and train employees in proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette and social distancing techniques. Understand and develop work practice and engineering controls that could provide additional protection to your employees and customers, such as: drive-through service windows, clear plastic sneeze barriers, ventilation, and the proper selection, use and disposal of personal protective equipment. These are not comprehensive recommendations. The most important part of pandemic planning is to work with your employees, local and state agencies and other employers to develop cooperative pandemic plans to maintain your operations and keep your employees and the public safe. Share what you know, be open to ideas from your employees, then identify and share effective health practices with other employers in your community and with your local chamber of commerce.

### **Protecting Your Employees**

For most employers, protecting employees will depend on emphasizing proper hygiene (disinfecting hands and surfaces) and practicing social distancing. Social distancing means reducing the frequency, proximity, and duration of contact between people (both employees and customers) to reduce the chances of spreading pandemic influenza from person-to-person. All employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices.

Occupational safety and health professionals use a framework called the "hierarchy of controls" to select ways of dealing with workplace hazards. The hierarchy of controls prioritizes intervention strategies based on the premise that the best way to control a hazard is to systematically remove it from the workplace, rather than relying on employees to reduce their exposure. In the setting of a pandemic, this hierarchy should be used in concert with current public health recommendations. The types of measures that may be used to protect yourself, your employees, and your customers (listed from most effective to least effective) are: engineering controls, administrative controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Most employers will use a combination of control methods. There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of control measure when considering the ease of implementation, effectiveness, and cost. For example, hygiene and social distancing can be implemented relatively easily and with little expense, but this control method requires employees to modify and maintain their behavior, which may be difficult to sustain. On the other hand, installing clear plastic barriers or a drive-through window will be more expensive and take a longer time to implement, although in the long run may be more effective at preventing transmission during a pandemic. Employers must evaluate their particular workplace to develop a plan for protecting their employees that may combine both immediate actions as well as longer term solutions. Here is a description of each type of control:

*Work Practice and Engineering Controls* - Historically, infection control professionals have relied on personal protective equipment (for example, surgical masks and gloves) to serve as a physical barrier in order to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease from one person to another. This reflects the fact that close interactions with infectious patients is an unavoidable part of many healthcare occupations. The principles of industrial hygiene demonstrate that work practice controls and engineering controls can also serve as barriers to transmission and are less reliant on employee behavior to provide protection.

Work practice controls are procedures for safe and proper work that are used to reduce the duration, frequency or intensity of exposure to a hazard. When defining safe work practice controls, it is a good idea to ask your employees for their suggestions, since they have firsthand experience with the tasks. These controls should be understood and followed by managers, supervisors and employees. When work practice controls are insufficient to protect employees, some employers may also need engineering controls.

Engineering controls involve making changes to the work environment to reduce work-related hazards. These types of controls are preferred over all others because they make permanent changes that reduce exposure to hazards and do not rely on employee or customer behavior. By reducing a hazard in the workplace, engineering controls can be the most cost-effective solutions for employers to implement. During a pandemic, engineering controls may be effective in reducing exposure to some sources of pandemic influenza and not others. For example, installing sneeze guards between customers and employees would provide a barrier to transmission. The use of barrier protections is common practice for both infection control and industrial hygiene. However, while the installation of sneeze guards may reduce or prevent transmission between customers and employees, transmission may still occur between coworkers. Therefore, administrative controls and public health measures should be implemented along with engineering controls. Examples of work practice controls include:

- Providing resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces. Encouraging employees to obtain a seasonal influenza vaccine (this helps to prevent illness from seasonal influenza strains that may continue to circulate).
- Providing employees with up-to-date education and training on influenza risk factors, protective behaviors, and instruction on proper behaviors (for example, cough etiquette and care of personal protective equipment).
- Developing policies to minimize contacts between employees and between employees and clients or customers.
- More information about protecting yourself, your coworkers and employees, and your family can be found at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

*Administrative Controls* - Administrative controls include controlling employees' exposure by scheduling their work tasks in ways that minimize their exposure levels. Examples of administrative controls include:

- Developing policies that encourage ill employees to stay at home without fear of any reprisals.
- The discontinuation of unessential travel to locations with high illness transmission rates.
- Consider practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees such as e-mail, websites and teleconferences. Where possible, encourage flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting or flexible work hours to reduce the number of your employees who must be at work at one time or in one specific location.
- Consider home delivery of goods and services to reduce the number of clients or customers who must visit your workplace.

- Developing emergency communications plans. Maintain a forum for answering employees' concerns. Develop internet-based communications if feasible.

### **Reducing the Risk of Exposure to Pandemic Influenza in the Workplace**

The best strategy to reduce the risk of becoming infected with influenza during a pandemic is to avoid crowded settings and other situations that increase the risk of exposure to someone who may be infected. If it is absolutely necessary to be in a crowded setting, the time spent in a crowd should be as short as possible. Some basic hygiene (see [www.cdc.gov/flu/protct/stopgerms.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protct/stopgerms.htm)) and social distancing precautions that can be implemented in every workplace include the following:

- Encourage sick employees to stay at home.
- Encourage your employees to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or with hand sanitizer if there is no soap or water available. Also, encourage your employees to avoid touching their noses, mouths, and eyes.
- Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or to cough and sneeze into their upper sleeves if tissues are not available. All employees should wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer after they cough, sneeze or blow their noses.
- Employees should avoid close contact with their coworkers and customers (maintain a separation of at least 6 feet). They should avoid shaking hands and always wash their hands after contact with others. Even if employees wear gloves, they should wash their hands upon removal of the gloves in case their hand(s) became contaminated during the removal process.
- Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacles, and with a place to wash or disinfect their hands.
- Keep work surfaces, telephones, computer equipment and other frequently-touched surfaces and office equipment clean. Be sure that any cleaner used is safe and will not harm your employees or your office equipment. Use only disinfectants registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and follow all directions and safety precautions indicated on the label.
- Discourage your employees from using other employees' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment.
- Minimize situations where groups of people are crowded together, such as in a meeting. Use e-mail, phones and text messages to communicate with each other. When meetings are necessary, avoid close contact by keeping a separation of at least 6 feet, where possible, and assure that there is proper ventilation in the meeting room.
- Reducing or eliminating unnecessary social interactions can be very effective in controlling the spread of infectious diseases. Reconsider all situations that permit or require employees, customers, and visitors (including family members) to enter the workplace. Workplaces which permit family visitors on site should consider restricting/eliminating that option during an influenza pandemic. Work sites with on-site day care should consider in advance whether these facilities will remain open or will be closed, and the impact of such decisions on employees and the business.
- Promote healthy lifestyles, including good nutrition, exercise, and smoking cessation. A person's overall health impacts their body's immune system and can affect their ability to fight off, or recover from, an infectious disease.

### **Employees Living or Traveling Abroad**

Employees living abroad and international business travelers should note that other geographic areas have different influenza seasons and will likely be affected by a pandemic at different times than the United States. The U.S. Department of State emphasizes that, in the event of a pandemic, its ability to assist Americans traveling and residing abroad may be severely limited by restrictions on local and international movement imposed for public health reasons, either by foreign governments and/or the United States.

Furthermore, American citizens should take note that the Department of State cannot provide Americans traveling or living abroad with medications or supplies even in the event of a pandemic.

In addition, the Department of State has asked its embassies and consulates to consider preparedness measures that take into consideration the fact that travel into or out of a country may not be possible, safe, or medically advisable during a pandemic. Guidance on how private citizens can prepare to shelter in place, including stocking food, water, and medical supplies, is available at the [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) website. Embassy stocks cannot be made available to private American citizens abroad, therefore, employers and employees are encouraged to prepare appropriately. It is also likely that governments will respond to a pandemic by imposing public health measures that restrict domestic and international movement, further limiting the U.S. government's ability to assist Americans in these countries. As it is possible that these measures may be implemented very quickly, it is important that employers and employees plan appropriately. More information on pandemic influenza planning for employees living and traveling abroad can be found at:

[www.pandemicflu.gov/travel/index.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/travel/index.html)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

[www.state.gov/travelandbusiness](http://www.state.gov/travelandbusiness)

#### *For More Information*

Federal, state and local government agencies are your best source of information should an influenza pandemic take place. It is important to stay informed about the latest developments and recommendations since specific guidance may change based upon the characteristics of the eventual pandemic influenza strain, (for example, severity of disease, importance of various modes of transmission). Below are several recommended websites that you can rely on for the most current and accurate information:

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

[www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.fda.gov/cdrh/ppe/fluoutbreaks.html](http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/ppe/fluoutbreaks.html)

# BUSINESS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLANNING CHECKLIST

In the event of pandemic influenza, businesses will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy and society. Planning for pandemic influenza is critical. To assist you in your efforts, the Department of Health & Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed the following checklist for large businesses. It identifies specific activities large businesses can do now to prepare, many of which will also help you in other emergencies.

## 1.1 Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your business:

Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify a pandemic coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. The planning process should include input from labor representatives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify essential employees and other critical inputs (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, sub-contractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations by location and function during a pandemic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Train and prepare ancillary workforce (e.g. contractors, employees in other job titles, retirees).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop and plan for scenarios likely to result in an increase or decrease in demand for your products and/or services during a pandemic (e.g. effect of restriction on mass gatherings, need for hygiene supplies)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine potential impact of a pandemic on company business financials using multiple possible scenarios that affect different product lines and/or production sites.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine potential impact of a pandemic on business-related domestic and international travel (e.g. quarantines, border closures).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Find up-to-date, reliable pandemic information from community public health, emergency management, and other sources and make sustainable links.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish an emergency communications plan and revise periodically. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement an exercise/drill to test your plan, and revise periodically.

## 1.2 Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your employees and customers:

Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forecast and allow for employee absences during a pandemic due to factors such as personal illness, family member illness, community containment measures and quarantines, school and/or business closures, and public transportation closures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. hand-shaking, seating in meetings, office layout, shared workstations) among employees and between employees and customers (refer to CDC recommendations)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage and track annual influenza vaccination for employees.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate employee access to and availability of healthcare services during a pandemic, and improve services as needed.

## 1.3 Establish policies to be implemented during a pandemic:

Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for employee compensation and sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g. non-punitive, liberal leave), including policies on when a previously ill person is no longer infectious and can return to work after illness.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for flexible worksite (e.g. telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for preventing influenza spread at the worksite (e.g. promoting respiratory hygiene/ cough etiquette, and prompt exclusion of people with influenza symptoms).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for employees who have been exposed to pandemic influenza, are suspected to be ill, or become ill at the worksite (e.g. infection control response, immediate mandatory sick leave).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for restricting travel to affected geographic areas (consider both domestic and international sites), evacuating employees working in or near an affected area when an outbreak begins, and guidance for employees returning from affected areas (refer to CDC travel recommendations).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's response plan, altering business operations (e.g. shutting down operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees.

#### 1.4 Allocate resources to protect your employees and customers during a pandemic:

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Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal) in all business locations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhance communications and information technology infrastructures as needed to support employee telecommuting and remote customer access.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure availability of medical consultation and advice for emergency response.

#### 1.5 Communicate to and educate your employees:

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Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop and disseminate programs and materials covering pandemic fundamentals (e.g. signs and symptoms of influenza, modes of transmission), personal and family protection and response strategies (e.g. hand hygiene, coughing/sneezing etiquette, contingency plans).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anticipate employee fear and anxiety, rumors and misinformation and plan communications accordingly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disseminate information to employees about your pandemic preparedness and response plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide information for the at-home care of ill employees and family members. Develop platforms (e.g. hotlines, dedicated websites) for communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers, and customers inside and outside the worksite in a consistent and timely way, including redundancies in the emergency contact system.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify community sources for timely and accurate pandemic information (domestic and international) and resources for obtaining counter-measures (e.g. vaccines and antivirals).

## 1.6 Coordinate with external organizations and help your community:

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Done	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborate with insurers, health plans, and major local healthcare facilities to share your pandemic plans and understand their capabilities and plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborate with federal, state, and local public health agencies and/or emergency responders to participate in their planning processes, share your pandemic plans, and understand their capabilities and plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate with local and/or state public health agencies and/or emergency responders about the assets and/or services your business could contribute to the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share best practices with other businesses in your communities, chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

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*This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal or medical advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice and a medical professional for medical advice.*

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# Prevention Newsletter

*...for the health and well-being of you and your family.*

*Each season is unique, but each year, anywhere from 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets the flu. Around 200,000 people are hospitalized due to its complications, and another 36,000 die from it. Yet, some myths still remain about its origination and transmission. It is important to be correctly informed about the disease in order to remain healthy during the miserable flu season.*

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## Facts about the Flu

The flu is an infection of the respiratory tract caused by the influenza virus. It is transmitted mainly through the air, such as when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The flu virus is present in every region in the United States, and is not just a “cold weather” disease.

### Symptoms of the Flu

Many times, flu symptoms can be confused with a common cold. The most common signs of the flu include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Extreme fatigue
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Stomach ailments such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (can occur in adults, but is most common in children)

### If Bitten by the Flu Bug

If, despite your best efforts, you do find yourself knocked down by the flu, it is important to take good care of yourself. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following:

- Stay home from work! It's your best chance for recovery, and you will avoid spreading the disease to others.
- Get lots of sleep.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take over-the-counter (OTC) medications appropriate for your ailments.
- Consult your doctor early on to follow the best course of treatment.

*If you do find yourself knocked down by the flu, take good care of yourself.*



**Prevention**

It is possible for serious complications to arise from the flu, including bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. This is why it is crucial to do all you can to prevent the virus from attacking you in the first place.

The CDC states that three simple steps should be taken in order to avoid the flu:

- 1) **Get a flu vaccine.** It is the first and most important step in protecting against the disease.
- 2) **Take preventive actions** – cover your mouth when you sneeze, and wash your hands often, especially if you are in the presence of people that may be infected. Hand sanitizers are just as effective if you can't get to the sink.
- 3) **Take antiviral drugs** if your doctor recommends them. These are prescription drugs that fight the flu by keeping the viruses from reproducing in your body.

**Facts about Flu Shots**

Yearly flu vaccination is recommended by the CDC for children ages 5-18. Vaccination should take place in September or as soon as the vaccine is available. Those in groups known as "high risk" should also receive a yearly flu shot. Those groups include children, pregnant women, people ages 50 and older, those who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities, and those who live with or care for those at high risk for the flu, such as health care workers.

Contrary to popular belief, you cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine – but sometimes side effects mimic those of the flu, such as a headache, low fever, and/or runny nose. These will only persist for a day or less, however.

Those who should NOT get a flu shot are people with a severe allergy to eggs, those who have had severe reactions to flu shots in the past, and people who previously developed Guillaine-Barre Syndrome in the first 6 weeks after getting a flu shot.

**Emergency Situations**

Sometimes with the flu come some unexpected medical emergencies. It is important to be aware of the warning signs in order to receive effective treatment.

In children, emergency warning signs include:

- Fast breathing (or trouble breathing)
- Skin color with a blue tint
- Serious dehydration
- Not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable the child does not want to be touched
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs are:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

It is important to seek medical care immediately if someone suffering from the flu is experiencing any of those signs.

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# Influenza

## *Facts about the flu*

Most people experience several bouts with influenza, or the flu, several times in their lifetime. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, five to 20 percent of the United States population gets the flu each year and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized as a result of complications from the illness. These complications include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections and dehydration. The flu can also worsen conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma and diabetes.

### **Influenza**

The flu is an infection of the respiratory tract that is caused by the influenza virus. It is spread mainly through airborne transmission, unlike the common cold, which is spread by direct contact. This

means that when a person who has the flu sneezes, coughs or even speaks, he/she is filling the air with microscopic droplets that are filled with flu particles. These droplets are small enough to remain in the air long enough to be inhaled by another person, and once they land in the new host, they begin reproducing rapidly. Sometimes you can become infected with the flu by touching something that has the flu virus on it and then touching your nose or mouth. In addition, a healthy adult can infect others one day prior to having flu symptoms and up to five days after becoming ill. In other words, you can transmit the flu to others before you know that you have it yourself. So, why do we remain susceptible to the flu year after year? The influenza virus is coated with proteins that change constantly. This gradual change in the virus, called an antigenic drift, renders it unrecognizable to our immune systems, and makes it possible for us to be susceptible to influenza every year. In addition, entirely new

subtypes of the virus appear from time to time.

### **Flu Symptoms**

Flu symptoms are often confused with those of the common cold, when in reality the symptoms of the two conditions are quite different. Influenza is most often associated with the sudden onset of fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, cough and sore throat. If flu symptoms persist for more than three to four days, medical attention is recommended since they can lead to a more serious condition.

### **Prevention**

The flu vaccine, or the flu shot, is your best chance of preventing the illness, and it can help to lessen the severity



of the flu if you do get it. Anyone who wants to lower their chances of acquiring the flu virus can and should get the flu shot. In addition, people who have an increased risk of getting the flu and experiencing serious complications from it should be vaccinated each year, including:

- People over age sixty-five
- Nursing home patients
- People over six months old with health problems
- Children and teenagers who take aspirin regularly
- People who have close contact with the elderly or those with health problems
- People with weakened or compromised immune systems

The best time to receive the flu vaccine is from October through mid-November. Influenza season runs from November until April, and peaks from December through March.

### **Other Precautions**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay away from others when you feel under the weather.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often to protect against germs.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth in case your hands are contaminated with the illness.
- Get plenty of sleep, stay physically active, manage your stress and eat a nutritious diet to help your body fight off disease.

### **Did you know...?**

During the last century three major flu epidemics occurred. These epidemics, during 1918, 1957 and 1968, resulted in over 600,000 deaths combined.

