

Pandemic Preparedness

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The World Health Organization has raised the current phase of pandemic alert to 5. “Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the

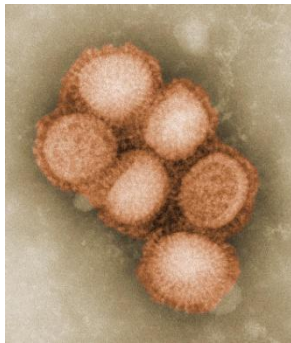


Figure 1. Swine flu virus
[Credit: CDC/Goldsmith
and Balish]

planned mitigation measures is short.”

The number of infections and severity of illness of this influenza outbreak is hard to estimate at this time. Therefore, it is prudent to review and update pandemic preparedness plans

written years ago. This eNewsletter provides guidance on steps that your organization can

take to review, update, develop, and exercise a pandemic preparedness plan.

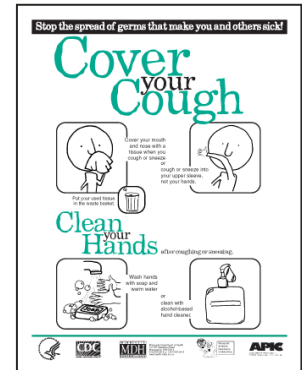
Program Management

Assemble members of your pandemic preparedness team, and review official reports of the swine flu outbreak, guidance from public health authorities with jurisdiction over your facilities, and the status of existing policies, plans, and procedures. Your pandemic team should be lead by senior management to provide direction and support. The heads of operations, legal, communications, human resources, medical, facilities, supply chain, security, environmental health and safety, emergency management, and business continuity or their representatives should participate.

If pandemic preparedness roles and responsibilities have not been defined within your plan, define them now.

Prevention & Mitigation Measures

Now is the time to promote proper personal hygiene by posting and distributing “[cover your cough](#)” and [hand washing](#) educational literature available from public health authorities. Consider providing hand sanitizers, setting up hand sanitation stations for visitors and or distributing literatures to arriving guests.



Evaluate methods for “social distancing” that may be needed to separate workers and make them more comfortable in the work environment.

Company Policies & Procedures

Review company policies and procedures including travel, sick leave, family leave, and telecommuting.

Prepare to revise travel policies if governmental authorities issue travel advisories. Recognize that employees may resist assignments requiring travel to areas perceived to be at greater risk.

Review sick and family leave policies. Employees that are rewarded for not using sick leave may come to work even though they are ill. Review family leave policies regarding time off to care for sick family members. Consider employees needing dependent (child and elder) care when schools or other facilities are closed.

Test the ability to support large numbers of telecommuters and verify that employees have secure connectivity to work remotely.

Pandemic Preparedness Plan

The pandemic preparedness plan should align with the U.S. and WHO pandemic alert phases. Preparedness activities should be commensurate



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with the current alert level. Review your planning assumptions and discuss the implications of scenarios that are more severe than the assumptions used for development of your plan.

Pandemic preparedness plans should address the following planning tasks.

- Succession of management; transfer of authority and responsibility
- Coordination with government officials
- Business continuity: Identification of essential business functions and minimum resources to support them; maintenance of supply and distribution chain
- Infection control in the workplace
- Surveillance of employee health; forecasting employee absences
- Sustaining essential employees; employee family care requirements
- Risk communications

Review the succession of management, supervisory and operations staff and your organization's governance requirements. If managers, supervisors, or key employees are sick or unavailable to work, who can assume their job duties? Review cross training and documentation needed for substitutes to assume the responsibilities of absent employees.

“the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.” WHO

Assign staff to monitor official instructions from public health and governmental authorities to ensure you have the latest and most accurate information. Subscribe to government mailing lists to receive their latest broadcasts.

Review your [business continuity plan](#) to identify critical business functions and the internal and external resources—including people—needed to support them. Evaluate critical suppliers and vendors and their ability to provide continuous service during a pandemic. Carefully scrutinize single or sole sources suppliers and identify backups, if necessary.

Monitor the health and well being of employees and their families. This will enable you to

forecast absences and plan for the absences of sick employees or those who must care for sick family members or who must remain at home because of the lack of child or senior care.

Review [guidance documents](#) on how to support the psychological needs of employees.

Communications during any emergency is critical, so implementation of a [risk communications plan](#) is essential. Consider all of the audiences that you need to reach including employees and their families, customers, suppliers, tenants within your buildings, and others. Provide timely, factual information and identify where recipients can obtain additional information.

Training and Exercises

Pandemic preparedness like all aspects of your emergency management and business continuity plan requires training and exercising. Conduct a plan walk-through exercise to familiarize personnel with the plan and their role and responsibilities. Conduct a tabletop exercise to identify any gaps in plans or the ability of team members to carry out the plan. Scribe action items, prioritize, and follow-through to assure that tasks are completed.

Pandemic Preparedness Program

We can help you develop your pandemic preparedness program:

- Define roles, responsibilities, authorities, and tasks for each WHO pandemic phase
- Address personal hygiene and infection control
- Identify, and develop strategies to, sustain essential employees
- Develop risk communication strategies
- Write a plan document and provide training

If you need assistance, please [contact us](#).

Pandemic Planning Resources

- World Health Organization (WHO) Swine influenza page, WHO phase of pandemic alert
- PandemicFlu.gov, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
- Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist, PandemicFlu.gov



643 Massapoag Avenue, Sharon, MA 02067-3112
Tel. 781.784.0672 Fax. 781.784.3731
info@preparednessllc.com www.preparednessllc.com

- HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan Supplement 11 Workforce Support: Psychosocial Considerations and Information Needs
- Pandemic Influenza Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Guide for Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources, U. S. Department of Homeland Security
- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic, OSHA 3327
- Influenza Pandemic: Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

All of these resources can be accessed [here](#).

Additional Resources

Links to dozens of documents to help you with your pandemic preparedness plan as well as your full emergency response and business continuity program can be found on the [“Resources” page](#) of the Preparedness, LLC website.

Check out our [blog](#) if you are interested in developments in national standards, industry best practices, current events, and what it means for your preparedness program.

About Preparedness, LLC

Preparedness, LLC is a client-focused risk consulting company. Our mission is to assist our clients safeguard people, protect property and minimize business interruption. Our vision is to thoroughly understand each client’s business and become a long-term, trusted advisor.

If you would like a copy of our self-assessment checklist; have questions; or need assistance with the development, implementation, or evaluation of your preparedness program, please contact us.



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