

H1N1 Influenza
Pandemic Planning at the Department of Energy (DOE)
September 2009

The new H1N1 influenza virus (also called swine flu) burst on the scene in Mexico this past April and quickly spread to the United States, and then around the world. The World Health Organization classifies the H1N1 virus as a pandemic due to the global nature of the disease. Currently the disease severity is considered “moderate” because most people recover without the need for hospitalization or medical care. However, unlike seasonal influenza, which generally impacts the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, this virus appears to infect children and young adults between the ages of 4 and 25. Other vulnerable populations include diabetics, pregnant women, those with asthma and those with weakened immune systems due to other medical conditions. However, no one is immune to this disease.

The H1N1 virus poses a credible threat to the health of DOE employees and to the Department’s criteria roles in national security and electrical power. Unlike other emergency scenarios that threaten infrastructure or equipment, influenza strikes DOE’s most critical resource, our human capital. The Department, through the Biological Event Monitoring Team, has developed a pandemic plan to address and mitigate the risks to the workforce. The recommended guidelines are based in sound public health practice and guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Federal Government has directed Federal agencies to develop pandemic plans, and has strongly encouraged that private business sectors do likewise. The Department’s plan is three pronged and includes: 1) the *Recommended Actions Matrix*, a phased approach in response to an influenza outbreak, 2) human capital guidance, such as sick leave policy, and 3) information on social distancing through teleworking. Contractor organizations in the field are encouraged to review this material as it may serve as a model for the development of their own plans. Although contractor employees follow the human capital guidance of their own company, HHS and the Department of Homeland Security strongly encourage liberal leave policies in the event of illness or the care of a sick family member. In addition, each Program Office has been directed to develop a Continuity of Operations pandemic plan in the event that absenteeism reaches levels so high that a site’s operation or critical mission is jeopardized.

The Pandemic Information web page provides DOE employees with valuable information to address this public health challenge. It is located at <http://www.hss.energy.gov/healthsafety/pandemic.html> . You are encouraged to review the posted information. Check it regularly as new information is added or updated.

While the Department continues to prepare to meet this challenge, you are your own best protection against H1N1. Wash your hands, cover your cough or sneeze, and stay home if you are sick.