



# MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

## DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### FACT SHEET

### PANDEMIC INFLUENZA AND BUSINESSES

During an influenza pandemic, we won't experience "business as usual." Businesses can take steps, however, to minimize the risks posed by a pandemic influenza. Planning in advance will help protect employees, minimize disruptions, and limit negative impacts on customers, the economy, and local communities.

Here are some suggestions to consider in your business' planning for a pandemic.

#### Individual Employees

- ❖ Encourage employees to get the annual flu vaccination. Although not specific to a pandemic influenza, the annual flu vaccine could improve an individual's immune system.
- ❖ Educate employees about preventative actions such as social distancing and covering their cough.
- ❖ Tell employees to avoid shaking hands with or hugging other people.
- ❖ Suggest using the stairs instead of crowded elevators.
- ❖ Help employees who use public transportation to make alternative arrangements. Suggest walking, cycling, driving a car or going early or late to avoid rush hour crowding on buses.

#### Hours and Methods of Operation

- ❖ Minimize face-to-face contact among employees and customers by using telephone, video conferencing and the Internet to conduct business, even for people in the same building.
- ❖ Alter workstation arrangements to increase distance between individuals.
- ❖ Extend your hours and allow flexible schedules to minimize the number of workers present at any one time.
- ❖ Enhance technology as needed to support employee telecommuting, conference calls and remote customer access.
- ❖ Separate work teams into different work locations, if possible.
- ❖ Allow an interval between shifts so that the worksite can be thoroughly ventilated.
- ❖ Consider "snow" days: days on which offices, schools, transportation systems are closed or cancelled, as if there were a major snowstorm.

#### Human Resources Issues

- ❖ Educate employees about possible cross-training and reassignment to cover critical business operations during pandemic waves when absenteeism peaks.
- ❖ Implement strategies that request and enable employees to stay home at the first sign of symptoms.
- ❖ Post visual alerts with key infection control messages (hand hygiene, covering coughs and sneezes, and social distancing) at notice boards, conference rooms, break rooms, and restrooms). For materials, please see: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/>
- ❖ Post visual alerts at all entry points, advising staff and visitors not to enter if they have symptoms of influenza.
- ❖ Develop and post procedures for employees who become ill at work.



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#### Maintenance

- ❖ Ensure adequate supplies of tissues, hand hygiene products (soap and water, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs), and cleaning supplies.
- ❖ Clean and disinfect shared work areas such as desktops and tables, and frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, stair rails, etc., at least between shifts or more often if possible. Specialized cleaning solutions are not needed. Routinely used cleaning products (EPA-registered disinfectants, bleach solution) may be used.
- ❖ Focus on cleaning frequently touched surfaces/items in areas where employees are working (not all areas of a building may be used in a pandemic).
- ❖ Advise employees not to share telephones or other equipment. Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected between users.
- ❖ Advise persons performing cleaning duties to wear cleaning gloves and to clean their hands after removing gloves.
- ❖ Avoid vacuuming and dusting during a pandemic to reduce the spread of dust particles that could contain influenza virus. Any necessary dusting should be damp, not dry. Any necessary vacuuming should be done using vacuum cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
- ❖ Ensure that work areas are well ventilated. Maintain HVAC systems regularly according to appropriate standards and building codes. Clean and/or change filters frequently.
- ❖ Remove non-essential items (e.g., magazines/newspapers) from common areas such as lunch rooms.

#### Meetings, Meals, and Breaks

- ❖ Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, workshops, and training sessions.
- ❖ If a face-to-face meeting with people is unavoidable, minimize the meeting time, use a large meeting room and instruct employees to sit as far away from other people as possible (>3 feet).
- ❖ Offer alternative places to eat meals, such as large conference rooms or work areas, rather than keeping your lunchroom open. Stagger breaks and lunch hours.
- ❖ Advise employees to bring a lunch from home and eat at their desks or away from others.

#### Travel

- ❖ Prepare for postponing or canceling business travel to affected geographic areas.