

Quick Reference for Businesses and Employers

2009 H1N1 Flu Planning and Response

Local flu conditions will influence the decisions that local public health officials will make regarding community-level strategies to lessen the spread of flu. Know where to get timely and accurate information that can guide your responses in each location where your operations reside. Be prepared to use multiple measures to protect employees and ensure continuity of business operations.

Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in April through December 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak)

Encourage employees to get vaccinated.

Encourage your employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.

Encourage employees to wash their hands often.

Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing or sneezing.

Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes.

Communicate the importance of covering coughs and sneezes and provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.

Clean surfaces that are likely to have frequent contact with hands with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Sick employees should stay home.

People with symptoms of flu-like illness¹ should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever².

Sick employees should be asked to go home.

Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day should be promptly separated from others and asked to go home.

¹Symptoms of flu-like illness include fever or chills AND cough, runny nose, or sore throat. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including the 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

²Fever is usually described as 100°F [37.8°C] or greater.



Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (continued)

Protect employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu.

Let employees know that if they are at higher risk for complications, they should check with their health care provider promptly, if they become sick. Encourage these employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.

Prepare for employees to stay home from work and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.

Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that business can continue operating.

Advise employees to take certain steps before traveling.

Advise employees to check for signs of flu-like illness before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling to notify their supervisor and, if needed, seek health care if they become sick.

Prepare for schools to be dismissed or for early childhood programs to close.

Allow employees to stay home to take care of their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood programs are closed. Encourage your employees with children to plan for child care alternatives.

Action Steps under More Severe Flu Conditions (increased severity than that of April through December 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak)

If flu conditions become more severe than that of the April through December 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak, there may be an increase in employee absenteeism and a need to add additional protective measures. Consider the following measures if flu conditions are more severe, and use them along with the action steps above.

Consider active screening of employees who report to work.

At the beginning of the workday or the beginning of each shift, ask all employees about flu-like symptoms¹ and those with symptoms should be asked to go home.

Consider alternative work environments for employees at higher risk for complications of flu.

Change work duties, work location, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, if feasible, or stay home.

Increase social distancing in the workplace.

Avoid crowded work settings, cancel business-related face-to-face meetings, space employees farther apart, cancel non-essential travel, promote teleworking, and use staggered shifts to have fewer employees in the workplace at the same time.

Advise employees about possible disruptions and special considerations while traveling overseas.

Travel restrictions may be enacted by some countries, which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while traveling. Plan ahead to limit non-essential travel and create contingency plans for employees on international travel.

Prepare for school dismissal or closure of early childhood programs.

School dismissals and closure of early childhood programs are more likely at higher levels of severity. Be prepared to allow employees to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood programs are closed.

Other considerations.

Employers should be aware that the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu could change rapidly; therefore, recommendations to communities and businesses could be revised quickly. Planners should identify sources of timely and accurate information so that they are aware of changes to recommendations and can promptly implement revised or additional measures.