



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
Department of Public Welfare

**SUBJECT:** Release of Pandemic Preparedness Flyers  
by the Governor's Office of Administration and  
the PA Department of Health

**TO:** Commonwealth Business Partners

**FROM:** Office of Developmental Programs

Although there is no immediate threat of an influenza pandemic or widespread flu epidemic in Pennsylvania, state and local government officials are taking a positive approach through various resources for preparation should such a pandemic ever occur. The flyers contain information that is intended to assist you in preparing for response to a pandemic situation. The flyers can be shared to provide accurate information for prevention. This information is not intended to create undue concern but rather to provide accurate information to prepare in case of such a pandemic situation.

This information will be helpful to you and could be included in the emergency preparedness planning for your agency or facility. For more information on other approved resources for employees, citizens, and the community, please view the state website, [www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us).

Thank you.

Attachments



## Pandemic Q & A

### What is pandemic influenza?

An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears in the human population, causes serious illness, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Like the seasonal influenza many people experience every year, pandemic influenza will probably spread by infected people coughing or sneezing and by touching an infected surface. Unlike seasonal influenza, people will have little immunity to the virus that causes a pandemic.

An influenza pandemic is likely to cause more severe illness, even death, and affect more people than seasonal flu. A pandemic could also have serious effects on daily living – hospitals could be overwhelmed, schools and businesses might close, and travel might be restricted.

Right now, there is no pandemic influenza in the U.S. or the world. The H5N1 strain of the avian influenza virus has some properties that make scientists believe it could cause the next pandemic. For instance, scientists believe that the virus could mutate and become easily transmissible from person to person – the final step needed for a pandemic.

### What is Avian Influenza?

Avian influenza is a disease of wild, domesticated or farm birds. There are many different strains of avian influenza. Most strains do not cause illness in people.

A newer strain of avian influenza, H5N1, is the main cause of concern among the scientific and medical community right now. The H5N1 strain can infect birds, other animals and people. The virus emerged in Asia, but is spreading to new regions. More than 200 people have been infected with avian flu and about half have died.

Most people who were infected with avian flu live with birds in their home or have very close contact with infected birds or their droppings. In the United States, such close contact with birds is rare because most people raise chickens in outside enclosures or in separate buildings that are very secure.

### Is it safe to eat chicken, turkey or duck?

Yes. First of all, it is very unlikely that infected poultry would enter the U.S. food supply. However, you should always fully cook all poultry to the proper temperature (at least 165° F) to destroy germs, including the bird flu virus. Keep hands, utensils, and surfaces clean when handling raw poultry.

### Is it safe to handle live wild birds?

You should view all wildlife from a distance and practice good hygiene to minimize your exposure to any virus or bacteria. Wear rubber gloves when touching or handling a live bird, cleaning and stocking backyard bird feeders, or handling game. Thoroughly clean any surfaces that come into contact with the animal.

### Is it safe to handle dead birds?

Avoid bare-hand contact when handling dead birds. Use rubber gloves or a shovel to pick up the bird and seal it in a plastic bag. You can also insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird. Douse the bird with chlorine bleach

inside the bag. Tie the plastic bag and then place inside a second bag and tie it. Place the bags in the trash and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

### Are my pets safe?

There is no avian influenza virus present in the U.S., so there is no risk to other animals. However, some domestic animals including pigs, cats and ferrets can be infected with avian influenza viruses. There have been no cases of infection in dogs.

All H5N1 avian flu infections in domestic cats in other countries appear to be the result of ingesting raw meat from an infected bird. There is no indication that infected cats can pass the virus to humans. You can protect your pets by keeping them indoors as much as possible and discouraging them from hunting or eating wildlife.

### What is Pennsylvania doing to prepare?

Although there is no immediate threat of an influenza pandemic reaching Pennsylvania, state and local officials are taking an aggressive approach to preparing for local outbreaks in birds and humans. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture leads the nation in its ability to monitor poultry flocks for avian influenza and contain outbreaks. The Pennsylvania Department of Health has extensive experience responding to many types of disease outbreaks, and uses an award-winning disease surveillance system to immediately spot outbreaks and monitor their spread. Local officials, hospitals and community organizations continue to plan for the impact of a pandemic on local services.

### What can I do to prepare?

- Make a kit of essential supplies for your home (such as food, water, medicine) as you would for any emergency.
- Practice good hygiene including washing hands frequently, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and regularly cleaning surfaces that are touched by multiple people.
- Practice good health habits including eating a balanced diet, getting regular exercise and getting sufficient rest.
- Stay home from work or school when you are sick.
- Get a yearly flu vaccination, especially those individuals at high risk.
- Discuss individual health concerns with your health care provider.
- Plan to help your neighbors, especially those who live alone or have health problems and may need assistance in an emergency.
- Volunteer with local organizations to help in emergency response.
- Stay informed about pandemic influenza and things you can do to prepare.

**For more information, visit**  
**[www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us)**



## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers

### *Basic Guidelines for Protecting Personnel*

#### What should I do to control infection in the workplace?

1. Employees should stay home if they are ill.
2. Make the following products available to all workers and maintenance staff:
  - Tissues
  - Waste receptacles
  - Soap and water
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Disinfectants and cleaning supplies
  - Extra office supplies
3. Remind personnel to use facial tissues to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and to dispose of them in a waste container.
4. Post signs asking all personnel to wash their hands frequently, especially under these circumstances:
  - After using the restroom;
  - After sneezing, coughing or blowing their nose;
  - Before eating; and
  - Before touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
5. Post signs at all sinks that explain proper hand washing procedures.
  - Run hands under warm water and apply soap.
  - Rub the front and back of hands and in between fingers for 15-20 seconds.
  - Rinse hands thoroughly and dry with a paper towel or hand dryer.
6. Make sure all restrooms remain fully stocked with soap, paper towels and other hygiene products.
7. Encourage personnel to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when they cannot wash their hands.
8. Discourage sharing of office supplies and equipment such as pens and computers.
9. Install protective barriers between employees and customers where appropriate (receptionists, bus drivers, bank tellers, etc.)
10. Ensure work spaces are well ventilated.
11. Help all personnel get regular flu shots. Although the seasonal flu shot will not protect against a pandemic flu, it can help you stay healthier overall.
12. Provide additional protections to employees who are at a higher risk of severe illness from the virus – persons age 65 and older, persons with existing health conditions, and pregnant women.
13. Allow unscheduled and nonpunitive leave for employees with ill family members.
14. Restrict business-related travel to affected geographic areas.
15. Establish guidelines for when employees who have become ill can return to work.
16. Develop policies and procedures for social distancing in the workplace.

#### What is social distancing?

Social distancing involves maintaining more space and minimizing contact between individuals to prevent the spread of infection. Workplaces can promote social distancing by planning for the following measures:

- Reduce face-to-face encounters that occur among employees and the public.
  - Discourage hand-shaking.
  - Use teleconferencing and other means of communication in place of face-to-face meetings.
  - Eliminate group lunches and stagger break schedules.
- Make adjustments to the work environment to allow personnel to stay at least 3 feet from each other.
- Establish flexible work hours to reduce the number of individuals in the workplace at the same time.
- Establish alternate worksites, including telecommuting from home.

#### How can I make sure the workplace is clean?

Surfaces that are frequently touched such as sinks, handles, railings and counters should be cleaned at least daily during a local outbreak of a pandemic virus. In addition, provide employees with the supplies they need to keep their own work areas clean. Most commercial disinfectants or diluted bleach solutions are effective for cleaning hard surfaces. There is no evidence to support the efficacy of widespread disinfection of the environment or air.

#### Should I hand out face masks to my employees?

The benefit of wearing disposable surgical or procedure masks in the workplace has not been established. Employees should be permitted to wear a mask if they choose, particularly if their job includes close contact with the public. Any mask must be disposed of if it becomes moist. Individuals should wash their hands after touching or discarding a used mask.

#### Is it safe for my employees to travel?

Right now, it is safe for employees to travel to countries with known cases of H5N1 avian influenza infection. Give employees ample time to research their destination so they can plan to avoid the highest risk areas. Travelers can find up-to-date health risk information for their destination from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

Once a pandemic starts, follow all travel restrictions put in place by the Federal government or international governments. Find ways to help employees who may have their daily commute disrupted by local restrictions, such as providing temporary lodging closer to work.

**For more information, visit  
[www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us).**



## Tips for Pennsylvania Workers

If an influenza pandemic were to occur in Pennsylvania, as much as 30% of the population could be affected – either falling ill or caring for ill loved ones.

If human illness were to reach these levels or higher, there could be a large amount of absenteeism in the workplace. The effects of a pandemic on your workplace could last months or even years, because pandemics often include several waves of illness.

Your employer should be making plans to continue operating during a pandemic. These plans might include the temporary use of new absenteeism policies, new working locations, the sharing of job duties or other changes. Talk to your employer about their plans and learn more about how you can prepare for a pandemic.

### How will a pandemic affect my job?

- You may have to take off work if you or your family becomes ill.
- You may have to make arrangements to care for children in the event that schools or day care centers are closed.
- Your supervisor may ask you to learn new skills, help out in new areas, or adjust your work schedule in order to keep operations going.
- Your place of business could close.
- Your supervisor may request that you protect yourself and others by using gloves, surgical masks, or protective barriers and screens (plastic, glass, Plexiglas, etc.).
- Supervisors may split some staff into different offices or work spaces to minimize the chance of infection among the group.
- You may be asked about your capabilities to work from home, or to use video and teleconferencing equipment in place of traveling to meetings.
- Your employer may expand self service or online transaction capabilities for clients.
- If the government would impose travel restrictions, your employer may need to provide you with temporary accommodations after or in between shifts.
- Special emergency sick leave policies may go into effect.
- Human Resources or management may need to maintain lists of employees who are out sick or taking care of family members to determine who may be coming back to work and when.
- Certain positions might be temporarily suspended in an emergency.
- Your employer might ask you to participate in a planning work group.
- Your supervisor may ask you to train another employee, or assign you to receive training, so many people can perform essential duties.

### What can I do to protect myself?

- Stay home from work if you are sick. This will help you recover faster and prevent the spread of the illness.
- Plan ahead for how you can adjust your work schedule if you need to care for an ill family member.
- Plan ahead for how you will care for your children if they are unable to go to school or day care.
- Start stocking up on basic emergency supplies in your home and at work.
- Purchase your own supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer, soap, tissues, and latex gloves for home and work.
- Practice thorough hand washing with soap and warm water. Teach your children about proper hand washing, too.
- Regularly clean your workspace and any surface touched by multiple people with a disinfectant (such as rubbing alcohol or diluted household bleach).
- Avoid sharing computers, supplies or workspaces with other employees.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your upper sleeve, not your hand, whenever you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away immediately and either wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you have not washed your hands.
- Start some healthy habits like getting more exercise, eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water, avoiding smoking, getting plenty of sleep and reducing stress.
- Stay informed about pandemic influenza and things you can do to prepare.

**For more information, visit  
[www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us).**

## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers

### *Basic Guidelines for Ensuring Continuity of Operations*

Keeping Pennsylvania's businesses working during a pandemic is key to our commonwealth's economic stability. It is imperative that businesses start planning now for the disruptions that may be caused by an influenza pandemic.

The Federal Government recommends that all employers, governments and individuals plan with the assumption that:

- Up to 40% of the workforce may be absent for periods of about 2 weeks or more at the height of a pandemic, with other absences occurring before and after the main peak.
- Employees will choose to stay home from work due to personal illness, to care for an ill family member, or due to fear.
- An individual can be infected with influenza two days before they feel any symptoms. This means they can start transmitting the virus to others before they even realize they are sick.
- An individual can still pass the virus to others days after they start feeling better.
- Epidemics will last 6 to 8 weeks in affected communities and may reoccur in another wave of illness.

The following business planning guidelines are part of what the Federal Government is required to do to ensure continuity of operations during a pandemic. These guidelines are universal and should be used by private sector businesses and all employers to guide pandemic planning.

- Clearly document your plans, policies and procedures. Include emergency leave and building closure policies.
- Identify your most essential business functions and services. Include payroll, accounting and administrative functions.
- Assign decision-making authority to your leaders and managers. Determine who will activate your pandemic emergency plan and handle personnel issues, such as absenteeism and off-site working arrangements.
- Outline who will fill key positions and who will serve as back-ups to these positions. Develop job action sheets that give detailed instructions on fulfilling essential job functions.
- Identify and prepare multiple alternate worksites. Use telecommuting and other technologies to allow employees to work from home.

- Make sure you have multiple ways of communicating with your employees and customers in order to limit face-to-face interactions.
- Keep your critical business records and databases up-to-date, backed-up in electronic and hard copy formats, and accessible to all key employees.
- Develop policies and procedures that will keep your employees healthy and safe. Use nonpunitive leave policies, offer work-from-home options and keep all common work areas disinfected.
- Educate your employees about your pandemic plans and cross-train back-up personnel for essential job duties. Encourage employee feedback and decision making.
- Plan to pass decision-making duties and other essential functions to secondary staff. Be prepared to shift your operational headquarters to a regional or subordinate office in a geographic location less affected by the pandemic.
- Plan for how you will lead your business back to normal when the pandemic subsides. Prepare for a permanent loss of some personnel due to deaths or other circumstances.

*Based on guidelines from the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan, May 2006*

**For more information, visit  
[www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us)**



## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers *Business Continuity Checklist*

### Topics to Consider

### Action Steps Needed

### Completed

Establish policies for restricting travel to affected geographic areas (both domestic and international), 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).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Establish 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.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

#### 4. Allocate resources to protect your employees and customers during a pandemic.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Determine what types of PPE you will need to keep employees safe, such as gloves or protective barriers like plastic or Plexiglas screens in reception areas, and procure accordingly.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Develop a cleaning schedule designed to minimize the spread of infection, and procure the necessary supplies.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies for employees (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Evaluate and enhance communications and information technology infrastructures as needed to support employee telecommuting (working from alternate locations including the home) and remote customer access. Consider whether or not your business functions allow for these alternatives and if employees will have the necessary computers or other equipment.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

#### 5. Communicate with and educate your employees.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Anticipate employee fear and anxiety, rumors and misinformation, and plan your communications accordingly. Educate your employees by using the materials found at [www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us), modifying them as appropriate. Education should include pandemic fundamentals, including signs and symptoms of influenza, modes of transmission, personal and family protection, and response strategies (e.g. hand hygiene, coughing/sneezing etiquette).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers

### *Business Continuity Checklist*

Topics to Consider	Action Steps Needed	Completed
Encourage annual influenza vaccinations for employees.	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess business wellness activities and expand as appropriate.	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate employee access to health insurance (medical, mental health and prescription), and expand coverage and benefits as needed.	_____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate employee access to mental health and social services, including employee assistance programs, community and faith-based resources, and improve coverage and network services as needed.	_____ _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify employees and key customers with special needs, and incorporate the requirements of such persons into your preparedness plan.	_____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Establish policies to be implemented during a pandemic.</b>	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate current policies on compensation and absences, and revise or establish policies for compensation/absences unique to a pandemic. Policies should be non-punitive and include liberal leave. Policies should include procedures for return to work after illness.	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish or enhance policies for flexible worksite (e.g. telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts).	_____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies for preventing influenza spread at the worksite (e.g. promoting respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette, hand washing, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and prompt exclusion of people with influenza symptoms).	_____ _____ _____ _____	<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"/>



## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers

### *Business Continuity Checklist*

#### Topics to Consider

#### Action Steps Needed

#### Completed

Plan for scenarios likely to result in an increase or decrease in demand for your products and/or services (e.g. effect of restriction on mass gatherings, need for hygiene supplies).

---

---

---

---

Assess the potential need to increase, decrease, or modify your business hours.

---

---

---

---

Assess the potential financial impact of a pandemic on your company's business by considering the effects on your production sites and product demand, if applicable.

---

---

---

---

Assess the potential impact of domestic and international travel restrictions on business-related activities such as shipping and receiving goods/supplies, and employee job-related travel.

---

---

---

---

Establish an emergency communications plan and revise it periodically. The plan should include identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.

---

---

---

---

Implement an exercise/drill to test your plan, and revise it periodically.

---

---

---

---

#### **2. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your employees and customers.**

Prepare for employee absences during a pandemic due to: personal illness; family member illness; community containment measures and quarantines; fear; school, day care and/or business closures; and public transportation disruptions.

---

---

---

---

Develop social distancing guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. handshaking, meetings, office layout, shared workstations) among employees and between employees and customers. Refer to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations.

---

---

---

---





## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers

### Business Continuity Checklist

Planning for a pandemic influenza is critical to the continuation of your business. The following checklist is a tool to help you identify important, specific issues to consider in the initial stages of preparing your business continuity plan, and the actions you plan to take. For more information on pandemic planning, visit [www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us](http://www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us)

Topics to Consider	Action Steps Needed	Completed
<b>1. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your business.</b>	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify a pandemic coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. Include input from labor representatives in the planning process.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine the key functions and operations of your business (critical business functions).	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine the extent to which your business's goods and services are essential to the community. For example, does your business support food production, transportation/distribution, health/safety, security and/or sanitation?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the critical employees and other critical inputs (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, sub-contractor services/products and logistics) required to maintain your critical business operations.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the employees who will back up key positions (succession planning).	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify your business partners and assess the impact that a pandemic may have on their ability to meet your needs for services and supplies. Determine if they have a business continuity plan, and create a list of emergency alternative partners/suppliers.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the flexibility of your work environment, and if it allows for quick changes during an emergency and enhance as necessary.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify, train and prepare ancillary workforce (e.g. contractors, cross-training current employees in other job titles/descriptions, retirees).	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the impact of potential travel restrictions/disruptions, particularly if your employees commute a notable distance and/or if many of your employees rely on mass transit.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Pandemic Planning for Business Owners and Employers *Business Continuity Checklist*

Topics to Consider	Action Steps Needed	Completed
Provide information to employees on how to care for themselves and ill family members in the home.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disseminate information to employees about your pandemic preparedness and response plan.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop platforms (e.g. hotlines, dedicated websites) for communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers, and customers in a consistent and timely way, including redundancies in the emergency contact system.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify community sources for timely and accurate pandemic information (domestic and international), and communicate this to employees.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6. Coordinate with external organizations and help your community.</b>	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss your pandemic plans with your insurers, vendors, health plans, and local healthcare facilities, and understand their capabilities and plans.	<hr/>	<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.	<hr/>	<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.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share best practices with other businesses in your communities, chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.	<hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/>