

## Avmor's Pandemic Preparedness



Paul Goldin – Avmor  
**Chief Sustainability  
Officer**  
**Director of Marketing  
and Technical Services**

Recent threats of pandemics, such as H1N1 (Swine Flu), have demonstrated the importance of advance planning and preparation. As public health studies and news reports indicate, a pandemic or worldwide outbreak of an influenza virus could overwhelm health and medical capacity and have a significant impact on business continuity. A coordinated effort is therefore required from every organization in order to protecting employees' health and safety and limit the impact of a pandemic.

This document includes information about basic flu prevention and the implications of a pandemic. Section II includes a Pandemic Plan focused on Early Preparation (phases 1-2), Preparing and Intervention (phases 3-5), Intervention Response (phase 6) and Post-Pandemic phases. It is meant to provide guidance and support to all organizations for developing their own response plan.

### I. INFLUENZA DEMYSTIFIED

#### 1. What is the flu?

Influenza or the "flu" refers to an illness caused by a member of the influenza family of viruses. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, sore throat, coughing and weakness and typically appear within 2 days after infection by a virus.

The flu is most active during a particular period every year: In North America this 'flu season' is generally between November and May. During this time, you can protect yourself by:

- Keeping yourself as healthy as possible. Eat well, get lots of rest and exercise.
- Following effective infection control practices such as hand washing and/or sanitizing regularly, and especially before eating or preparing food or after sneezing, coughing or using the washroom.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you do not have a tissue, cough into the crook of your elbow. This helps prevent the spread of the virus to others.
- Keeping your hands away from your face. Viruses are often transmitted by touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

A "pandemic flu" describes a worldwide outbreak of either a new type of Influenza A virus or one that has been inactive for a long period of time. This type of flu spreads easily from person to person and can cause serious illness regardless of age or physical health.

In addition to the steps for basic flu prevention, the steps below should be followed in order to help prevent infection in the event of a pandemic flu:

- Monitor local news bulletins for updates and instructions from public health officials.
- Follow advice from public health officials.
- Ensure you have a fully stocked first aid kit.
- Develop a strategy for managing closure of businesses you frequent – i.e. grocery store, bank.
- Arrange supplies to ensure you can be self-sufficient for a week or two in case you get sick and need to stay home, or you need to care for a sick family member.



- If your workplace appears to be unsafe because too many people are off sick, talk to your supervisor.



- Areas most frequently missed during hand washing
- Less frequently missed
- Not missed

(Adapted from Taylor L. (1978), An evaluation of hand washing techniques - I, Nursing Times, 12 January, pp 54-55)

### **Proper Hand Washing Technique**

1. Wet hands with warm running water prior to reaching for soap, either in bar or liquid form.
2. Rub hands together to make a lather. Do this away from running water, so the lather is not washed away.
3. Wash the front and back of hands, between fingers and under nails. Continue washing for 15 seconds or more.
4. Rinse hands well under warm running water.
5. Dry hands thoroughly with a clean towel or air dryer.

## **II. PANDEMIC PLAN**

### **1. Early Preparation (Phases 1 -2 ) Communication**

- **Establish a centralized emergency communication plan** to ensure that information is timely and accurate. Include identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including customers and suppliers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- **Develop policies, procedures, programs and materials** covering pandemic fundamentals (signs, symptom list, mode of transmission), personal and family protection and response strategies (hand hygiene, coughing/sneezing etiquette, contingency plans). Provide each employee with a personal pandemic kit, complete with X3 Hand Sanitizer / Avmor Citrus Hand Sanitizer, disinfectant spray or surface wipe for the workstation, nitrile gloves and surgical masks.
- **Provide a clear message** indicating that employees must protect themselves and others during the influenza pandemic with proper hand and respiratory hygiene.
- **Educate employees** so that they have a consistent, fact-based understanding of the range of a pandemic's likely impact, appropriate pandemic planning assumptions, possible mitigation strategies and useful trigger points. Factual information is available at [www.flightflu.ca](http://www.flightflu.ca), [www.combattezlgrrippe.ca](http://www.combattezlgrrippe.ca), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca), [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- **Prepare a pandemic checklist** (see attached document).

### **The importance of proper hand washing and hand hygiene**

Infectious diseases, such as colds and the flu, are the leading causes of employee absenteeism due to illness. Hand washing and hand hygiene are the most important methods for reducing the transmission of infectious agents. The effectiveness of proper hand washing is determined by the mechanical actions produced during friction of the hands on one another with soap, rinsing and drying.

## **Staff and Suppliers**



- **Identify a pandemic coordinator** and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness response planning.
- **Identify essential employees and other critical inputs** (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, sub-contractors services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations by location and function during a pandemic.
- **Outline a back-up plan:** every essential role should have at least one back-up and access to guidelines for decision-making.
- **Establish policies for flexible worksite** (e.g. telecommuting), including treatment of employees who have been exposed to pandemic influenza.
- **Establish reintegration guidelines** for employees who are no longer infectious and can return to work.
- **Encourage** employees to receive the annual flu shot. Offer a flu vaccine clinic at your workplace.

A pandemic health specialist is available to assist your organization in planning for a pandemic. This specialist is a valuable resource as she is designated to monitor all pandemic related activity and communications from WHO, CDC, federal, provincial and municipal agencies and can be reached via the Avmor website ([www.avmor.com](http://www.avmor.com)).

#### Building Procedures

- **Place hand sanitizer dispensers at all entrance and exits** to your building/offices with accompanying posters (e.g. X3 Hand Sanitizer / Avmor Citrus Hand Sanitizer).
- **Identify products or services** that will be essential or in increased demand.

## **2. Preparing and intervention (Phases 3 -5)**

#### Communication

- **Disseminate information to employees** about your pandemic preparedness and response plan.
- **Build organization awareness** and educate staff on the flu, including symptoms and the most contagious period.
- **Instruct staff on policies:** For example, if you are sick stay home, sick leave, etc.
- **Refuse access:** Communicate and train staff on when access may be refused and how to refuse building access.
- **Emergency training:** Train all employees and contractors on what is expected of them during an emergency.
- **Hold regular meetings** (daily, weekly or monthly) to inform staff of current situation and to prepare staff to take on more responsibilities in an emergency situation.
- **Direct staff to online information** which will be updated regularly for communicating pandemic status.

#### Staff and Suppliers

- **Designate a first responder** (and two backups) to respond to any employee who falls ill at the workplace.
- **Monitor personnel** working in close proximity to those who test positive.
- **Consider staggered or flex schedules** for service technicians to service busy facilities during facilities down or quiet time.
- **Request/obtain emergency plans** of suppliers and contractors.
- **Awareness of public activities:** Ask employees to be aware of public activities that may put them at risk (e.g. large public gatherings such as public transportation, churches, daycares, malls, airports, etc.).
- **Implement guidelines** to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face



contact (e.g. hand shaking) among employees and customers.

#### Building Procedures

- Bulk order enough personal preparedness equipment (PPE) for all employees for a 12 week pandemic period; surgical masks, disinfectant spray or surface wipes, hand sanitizer.
- Stock pile first responder PPE: gloves, protective eyewear, protective gowns, disposable thermometer.
- Ensure staff clean their own workstations, including phone, mouse and keyboard daily prior to being used.

### **3. Intervention and Response (Phase 6) Communication**

- **Place signage** at all entrance/exits and loading docks restricting access into the building.
- **Regularly communicate** to all employees the change of status to response.

#### Staff and Suppliers

- **Prohibit sick employees** from entering workplace.
- **Disinfection:** Encourage employees to disinfect their workspace with a disinfectant spray and cloth or disinfectant wipe upon entering their office and as needed throughout the day.
- **Independent work:** Encourage employees to work independently in their own offices and communicate via email and phone.
- **Preventative measures:** Where meetings are needed, all employees should wear a surgical mask, eye protection, and sanitize their hands before and after the meeting.
- **Manage health related issues:** Designate one person and one back up to manage health related issues, ensuring they are kept confidential and not shared with other employees. Monitor the health and absence of all employees.
- **Train one person and one back up on first responder equipment.** Should an employee fall ill at work, the employee should be sent home immediately & quarantined if the pandemic flu is suspected/confirmed.
- **Issue personal preparedness equipment (PPE)** to contractors and suppliers visiting the building, as well as service technicians to be used while in public.
- **Public exposure:** Encourage employees to track exposure.

#### **Good practices**

*Disposable face shields or protective goggles are preferable to reusable ones. When using a reusable shield a cleaning and disinfection protocol must be put into place.*

#### **Building Procedures**

- Restrict building access
- Designate one individual and one back-up to monitor entrance/exits for visitors
- Provide signage or posters at entrances if personnel is unavailable

### **4. Recovery (Post Pandemic) Communication**

- Communicate and hold post event meeting



## 5. Possible Delays Caused by a Pandemic

### Continuity of service during a pandemic situation:

- No services will be missed, unless the customer's business is closed. Only delays may be expected.

### Assuming that all customer businesses are open:

- 15% service absenteeism: No service delays expected.
- 30% service absenteeism: Possibility of 3-5 day delay.
- 50% service absenteeism: Possibility of 7-10 day delay.

In addition to preventing the spread of a pandemic, taking the time to educate yourself and your staff and having a procedure in place will go a long way towards safekeeping the health and well being of your most important asset: ***your employees.***

Infectious diseases, such as colds and the flu, are the leading cause of employee absenteeism due to illness. In 2008, full-time working Canadians took an average of 8 sick days, a full day more than just four years earlier<sup>1</sup>, resulting in more than 169 million missed days of work. Lost productivity in the workplace from the flu alone costs employers an estimated \$15 billion. What's more, a proactive approach will ensure the continuity of all aspects of your business, providing you with an edge over your less-prepared competitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/health47c-eng.htm>