

# Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for Local Utilities

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# INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

## **Problem Statement:**

The water, waste water and power utilities serving Volusia County are required to develop emergency response plans. Over time the number of possible emergency situations has increased. Emergency response plans were originally written for acts of nature such as flooding, fire, and hurricanes. The list has grown to include not only simple acts of vandalism, but terrorist acts such as the use of chemical, biological or radioactive weapons. Over time, when emergencies do not occur, less time, thought, and resources are put into emergency response planning and exercises. Emergency response plans need to be reviewed regularly to see if they address the latest possible threat. An all disaster response plan needs to be developed, maintained and implemented.

Currently the utilities are not knowledgeable about the possibility and implications of pandemic influenza. They have not been educated and have not developed emergency response plans that address this issue. Their lack of knowledge and planning will have a negative effect on public health and safety in the event of a flu pandemic. This needs to be addressed now. In the long term all new emerging threats need to be considered and planned for in a timely manner.

# *10 Essential Environmental Health Services:*

**This project seeks to enhance or fulfill the following essential environmental health services:**

Essential Environmental Health Service 3 Inform, educate, and empower people about environmental health issues. This will be accomplished by meeting with the utilities to educate them about pandemic influenza.

Essential Environmental Health Service 4 Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve environmental health problems. This will be accomplished by encouraging the utilities to work with each other and the Health Department to develop their plans and provide mutual support in the advent of pandemic influenza.

Essential Environmental Health Service 5 Develop policies and plans that support individual and community environmental health efforts. This will be accomplished by encouraging the utilities to develop emergency response plans that address pandemic influenza.

Essential Environmental Health Service 7 Link people to needed environmental health services and assure the provision of environmental health services when otherwise unavailable. This will be accomplished by establishing working relationships with the utilities whereby they know our technical expertise and services are available to them.

Essential Environmental Health Service 8 Assure a competent environmental health workforce. This will be accomplished by educating staff about pandemic influenza.

# ***National Goals Supported***

**This project seeks to support the following CDC Health Protection Goals:**

## **Healthy People in Every Stage of Life**

All people, and especially those at greater risk of health disparities, will achieve their optimal lifespan with the best quality of life in every stage of life.

## **Healthy People in Healthy Places**

The places people live, work, learn, and play will protect and promote their health and safety, especially those at greater risk of health disparities.

## **People Prepared for Emerging Health Threats**

People in all communities will be protected from infectious, occupational, environmental, and terrorist threats.

## **Healthy People in a Healthy World**

People around the world will live safer, healthier and longer lives through health promotion, health protection, and health diplomacy.

# **This project seeks to support the following goals and objectives of the CDC National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services:**

## **Goal 1: Build Capacity**

**Objective I-A:** Expand the nation's capacity to anticipate, recognize, and respond to environmental public health threats and to improve access to technology.

**Activity I-A-3:** *Provide guidance, training, consultation, and technical assistance to state, tribal, territorial, and local agencies.*

**Objective I-B:** Support, evaluate, and disseminate the results of new demonstration programs, best practices, and CDC-supported projects designed to improve livability and to prevent and control environmentally related illness.

**Activity I-B-3:** *Promote institutional and strategic changes to foster ongoing coordinated efforts with strategic partners (e.g., Department of Housing and Urban Development, EPA, state and local health departments) and other stakeholders to implement and evaluate environmental interventions to improve health and well-being for urban and rural residents.*

**This project seeks to support the following goals and objectives of the CDC National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services:**

## **Goal II: Support Research**

***Objective II-D:*** Implement environmental public health service demonstrations and evaluations in the built and natural environments that lead to healthier communities.

***Activity II-D-2:*** Evaluate best practices and gaps related to laws, ordinances, and regulations that affect environmental public health service delivery and practice.

***Objective IV-A:*** Identify and promote community-based strategies to elevate the image, importance, and need to improve environmental public health services.

***Activity IV-A-1:*** Sponsor, support, and participate in national, regional, state, and local conferences and meetings pertaining to environmental public health services.

**This project seeks to support the following goals and objectives of the CDC National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services:**

**Goal IV: Communicate and Market**

***Objective IV-B:*** Support educational approaches and models of best practices to gain community support and participation in addressing environmental public health service issues, concerns, and best models to organize, deliver, and market environmental public health services.

***Activity IV-B-1:*** Support activities and projects that demonstrate effective methods for interacting with environmental public health stakeholders. ***Activity IV-B-2:*** Recommend and disseminate the best environmental public health service models to engage and empower local communities. ***Activity IV-B-3:*** Support activities that demonstrate effective methods for marketing environmental public health services to policy makers and the public.

**This project seeks to support the following goals and objectives of the CDC National Strategy to Revitalize Environmental Public Health Services:**

**Goal VI: Create Strategic Partners**

**Objective VI:** Coordinate and promote activities that identify critical stakeholders, and foster communication and interaction among agencies, organizations, and interests that influence environmental public health services.

*Activity VI-AI-1: Identify stakeholders who influence all components of the environment (built and natural) that have an impact on environmental public health services.*

*Activity VI-AI-2: Support activities (e.g., conferences ,meetings, seminars, etc.) that influence stakeholders to work together to improve environmental public health.*

*Activity VI-AI-3: Develop mechanisms for regular communication and coordination among stakeholders.*

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES/DESCRIPTION/DELIVERABLES:**

**Program Goal:** To ensure local municipal water, wastewater and electric utilities develop an emergency response plan that addresses Pandemic Influenza.

**Health Problem:** Lack of planning by local utilities for pandemic influenza could lead to disruptions or loss of operation capabilities in the event of an outbreak. Disruptions or loss of utility service will lead to unsanitary and unhealthful conditions in our community. Public health will be at risk.

**Outcome Objective:** By April 15, 2007, 90% of local municipal water, wastewater and electric utilities will have developed emergency response plans addressing pandemic influenza.

**Determinant:** The determinant of the effectiveness of this project is the number of local municipal water, wastewater and electric utilities that have developed emergency response plans that address pandemic influenza.

**Impact Objective:** Local utilities will be educated about the possibility of pandemic influenza. They will be informed about the necessity to plan and prepare for this eventuality. They will be provided information and resources to enable them to prepare emergency response plans for pandemic influenza.

**Contributing Factors:** Utilities lack of awareness of the possibility of pandemic influenza.  
Lack of knowledge of the possible impacts of pandemic influenza on utility operations.  
Lack of knowledge of appropriate response.

## ***Process Objectives:***

**By April 7, 2006**, Volusia County Environmental Health staff will become educated about pandemic influenza.

**By April 7, 2006**, Volusia County Environmental Health staff will develop a presentation and resource materials for the local utilities.

**By April 15, 2006**, Volusia County Environmental Health will meet with local utilities to educate them about pandemic influenza and encourage them to develop emergency response plans to address this threat.

**By April 14, 2006**, Volusia County Environmental Health staff will establish a web-site concerning pandemic influenza issues.

**By October 15, 2006**, Volusia County Environmental Health staff will survey utilities to judge their progress and determine the need for additional meetings. Hold additional meetings as may be necessary.

**By April 15, 2007**, survey utilities to determine if they have completed their Emergency Response Plan.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### Events and Activities:

- ✓ Research pandemic influenza
- ✓ Educate Volusia County Environmental Health staff.
- ✓ Develop presentation objectives.
- ✓ Develop and print handouts.
- ✓ Design and populate website.
- ✓ Confirm utility contact information.
- ✓ Schedule meeting place.
- ✓ Announce meeting to the utilities.
- ✓ Conduct meeting.
- ✓ Inform utilities about pandemic influenza.
- ✓ Present resource materials.
- ✓ Encourage utilities to develop and maintain all disaster emergency response plans to include pandemic influenza.
- ✓ Survey utilities to determine their progress and need for follow up meeting.
- ✓ Schedule follow up meetings as may be necessary.

## **RESULTS:**

Volusia County Environmental Health staff met all of the process objectives leading up to the public water, waste water and power utilities meeting according to the proposed time frames. Staff hosted the meeting on Thursday April 13, 2006.

Staff presented the attendees with valuable information concerning the H5N1 virus and it's potentially devastating effects. Also discussed was the Volusia County Environmental Health Pandemic Influenza website ([www.volusiahealth.com/eh/panflu/](http://www.volusiahealth.com/eh/panflu/)) which contains influenza information valuable to the utilities and general public. The website is updated regularly as new information and resources become available. The utilities were encouraged to develop and maintain all disaster emergency response plans that include pandemic influenza. The utilities were given a "Public Utility Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist" to help them with their planning efforts.

The conference served to provide a forum for the utilities to learn more about the virus, to encourage them to begin their planning for such a pandemic event and to facilitate networking opportunities for their mutual support.

## **RESULTS:**

Forty four persons representing twenty-five utilities as well as nine Environmental Health staff members were in attendance. At the end of the conference the attendees were given an evaluation form intended to determine the effectiveness of the presentations. Twenty three (23) forms were returned with twenty (20) giving the conference an overall rating of “Excellent” (87 %) and three (3) responses giving a rating of “Average” (13 %). The responses indicated that the information and resources were presented in a quality manner and that the conference had been useful and relevant to the utilities’ interests.

On October 19, 2006 the utilities were surveyed in an effort to determine what progress they had made with their pandemic influenza planning. Thirty nine (39) surveys were sent by e-mail. Tracking indicated that all e-mails were received and opened. Only three (3) surveys were returned (8 %). The three (3) surveys represented mixed results. One water/waste water and electric utility responded that their planning was complete and attached a copy of their plan. In the second response a water/waste water utility reported that they had made significant progress and their plan was nearly complete. The third respondent, a water/waste water utility, reported they had not begun the planning process yet.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

Based on the last survey response it is evident that further communication and follow up with the utilities is warranted. Perhaps the utilities were hesitant to return a survey that would indicate they had not made significant progress in developing their plan. At this point we intend to assign our Environmental Specialists to have face to face meetings with the utilities. Though these meetings we hope to gain a better understanding of the utilities' needs and how we may be of further assistance to them in their planning efforts.

## **Contact Information:**

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