

# Quick Reference for Businesses and Employers

## 2009-2010 Influenza Season 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 workers and ensure continuity of business operations.

### Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in Spring/Summer 2009)

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#### **Sick employees should stay home.**

People with symptoms of flu-like illness<sup>1</sup> should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever.<sup>2</sup>

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#### **Sick employees at work should be sent 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 sent home.

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#### **Encourage your employees to wash their hands often.**

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

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#### **Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes.**

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

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

Clean surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

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#### **Encourage employees to get vaccinated.**

Encourage employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and employees at higher risk for flu complications to get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Symptoms of influenza-like illness include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.

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

<sup>3</sup>For information on groups prioritized for seasonal flu vaccines see [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm). Different groups are prioritized for 2009 H1N1 flu, for more information see [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm).



## *Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (continued)*

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

Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, like pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, 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 as recommended when vaccines are available. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

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### **Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.**

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

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### **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps.**

Advise workers to check for signs of flu-like illness before traveling, to notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling how to seek health care if they become sick and need care. If employees become sick during travel, they should stay in their hotel room unless they are seeking medical care.

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### **Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or temporary closure of child care programs.**

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

## **Additional Action Steps to Consider Under Conditions of Increased Severity (compared to Spring/Summer 2009)**

If flu conditions become more severe than that of spring/summer 2009, there may be even higher 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.

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### **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 symptoms<sup>1</sup> and those with symptoms should be asked to go home.

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**Consider alternative work environments for employees at higher risk for complications of flu during periods of increased flu activity in the community.**

When possible, change work duties, work location, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications to reduce the number of exposures to people that may have flu. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home or stay home, if feasible.

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**Increase social distancing in the workplace.**

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

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**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.

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**Prepare for school dismissal or closure of child care programs.**

School dismissals and closure of child care programs are more likely when flu conditions are more severe. Be prepared to allow workers to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed.

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**Other considerations.**

Employers should be aware that the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu could change rapidly and local public health 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.