

Pandemic Influenza Awareness for Department of Energy Employees

Since the first occurrence of the novel H1N1 influenza virus (also referred to as Swine Flu) in April, the number of cases is increasing daily. Although the nature of this virus is unpredictable, it is a plausible scenario that the virus will infect 30-50 percent of the U.S. population this fall and winter, with symptoms in approximately 20-40 percent of the population (60-120 million people), more than half of whom would seek medical attention, according to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Due to a pandemic's potential to adversely impact the health of Department of Energy (DOE) employees and their families, and the Department's mission, it is very important that you become familiar with the Department's pandemic planning efforts.

The Biological Event Monitoring Team (BEMT) was established to ensure Department readiness in the event of a pandemic or other biological threat. The Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer has primary responsibility for BEMT, which provides medical, epidemiologic, and public health expertise to the Department. The National Nuclear Security Administration, responsible for the Department's Continuity of Operations (COOP), provides advice and direction on COOP activities related to pandemic planning. In addition, BEMT includes representatives from the Chief Information Officer, Offices of Management, Chief Human Capital Officer, General Counsel, Science, Environmental Management, Fossil Energy, Intelligence and Counterintelligence, and Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability.

Given the anticipated increase in illness and absenteeism due to the H1N1 influenza virus in the next few months, BEMT will continue to work on its pandemic planning on behalf of the entire Department. DOE's pandemic plan will include information and guidance on public health strategies that may mitigate the spread of this disease, as well as guidance on human capital issues for DOE Federal employees and guidance for contractor employees. Attached is guidance for Federal employees, supervisors, and human resources staffs.

Information on pandemic influenza, guidance, contacts, and links to important resources are available on the Department's pandemic Web site at:

<http://www.hss.energy.gov/HealthSafety/pandemic.html>.

Due to the evolving nature of this outbreak, the Web site will be updated frequently.

You play a critical role in protecting your own health, the health of your fellow employees, and your family. Please take the time to learn and practice cough and sneeze etiquette, wash your hands frequently, stay home if sick (at least 24 hours after a fever has ended), and get immunized with seasonal flu vaccine.

It is our joint responsibility to protect the health of the DOE workforce while continuing to ensure the Department meets its critical obligations.

Attachment

DOE Guidance on Preparing and Coping with the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Outbreak

(September 2009)

The following guidance supplements the guidance provided by the Office of Personnel Management for Federal employees, which is available at:

<http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/index.asp> and
<http://www.chcoc.gov/Transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=2452>.

A. **Federal Employees**

1. You are expected to keep your supervisor informed if you or anyone who lives with you has flu-like symptoms*. If you or anyone who lives with you has an influenza-like illness, or is diagnosed by your personal physician or medical service provider with suspected or confirmed 2009 H1N1 influenza, you should promptly report that to your supervisor. During this time you are expected to stay home until such time as you are no longer contagious (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends at least 24 hours after your fever is gone) and can return to the worksite. If a household member is ill, CDC recommends you voluntarily stay home for 7 days. If you are not sure whether you should return to the worksite, consult your physician or medical service provider and let your supervisor know when your physician has advised that you are no longer contagious.
2. If you are in a "high risk" category, that is: you are pregnant, have an existing health condition that may compromise your immune system, or have chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus), you should consider informing your supervisor of this situation so that precautionary measures, such as telework or leave may be taken at the onset of an outbreak in your area. You do not need to describe what your existing health condition is.
3. If you are unable to work, you are expected to request sick or annual leave, leave without pay (LWOP), or utilize compensatory time off or credit hours if available.
4. You should be prepared to telework if your work assignments are appropriate for working at an alternative worksite. If you are currently not on a regular or situational telework agreement, discuss the feasibility of teleworking under DOE's flexiplace program with your supervisor.
5. Make sure that your organization has your current emergency contact information. You should check and, if needed, update your contact information in the Employee Self Service (ESS), which can be found by scrolling over the "Update" button and clicking on "Emergency Contacts" on the drop-down list.
6. Check whether any travel advisories are posted on CDC's Web site (www.cdc.gov) or Department of State's Web site (www.state.gov) before departing on travel. If one does exist for your destination, then discuss alternative travel plans with your supervisor if the travel is work-related.
7. Periodically check the DOE pandemic Web site for updated information and guidance.

*One or more of the following: fever (102-104 F) lasting several days, aches/pain, chest discomfort (severe/pneumonia), tiredness/exhaustion, headache, fatigue lasting 2-3 weeks, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

B. **Supervisors**

1. In accordance with the Privacy Act, only release an employee's medical information to DOE officials and other DOE employees who have a need to know such information in the performance of their official duties. You should keep your senior management and human resources staff or, for Headquarters organizations, Administrative Officers, and anyone else who is responsible for your organization's pandemic planning and reporting informed of suspected and confirmed cases to determine if further action, such as an evacuation, is needed locally. You may also release such information to the appropriate public health officials.
2. Review the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance and any local implementation guidance or plan so that you are prepared to address employees' needs and cope with a local outbreak.
3. Foster telework in your organization for employees who are able to work. A sample contingency telework agreement for emergency situations is available from your servicing human resources office or on the DOE pandemic Web site at <http://www.hss.doe.gov/healthsafety/pandemic.html> that can be used to cover employees who are not currently on an agreement. It is recommended that all employees whose work can be performed at an alternative worksite be placed on a contingency telework agreement.

C. Human Resources Offices and Headquarters Administrative Offices

We are to keep the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer informed of all suspected and confirmed cases. This information should be reported to the Human Resources Division at 576-0928.