

As an employer, our company has a responsibility to safeguard the health of our workers, customers and community. Employers have been instructed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be cautious and develop preparedness plans to minimize employee infections. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our employees know what is expected of them in the event of a serious influenza outbreak.

## **PANDEMIC DESCRIPTION**

A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus that is different from seasonal flu viruses emerges and spreads quickly between people, causing illness worldwide. Most people will lack immunity to the pandemic flu virus. Pandemic flu can be more severe, causing more deaths than seasonal flu. Because it is a new virus, a vaccine may not be available right away. A pandemic could therefore overwhelm normal operations in workplace settings.

Employee absenteeism could go up if employees are sick or need to care for a sick family member. In a pandemic, schools and daycare centers may close requiring employees to stay home to care for their children. Healthy employees may be afraid to come to work and get sick from someone in the workplace, or bring the illness home to another family member that may be immunocompromised and have a harder time getting over the flu.

Unlike natural disasters or terrorist events, an influenza pandemic will be widespread, affecting multiple areas of the United States and other countries at the same time. A pandemic will also be an extended event, with the possibility of multiple waves of outbreaks in different areas. Each outbreak could last six to eight weeks and may occur over a year or more. It is unlikely that our employees will be free from potential exposure to the outbreak.

## **COMPANY POLICY**

This policy is designed to inform you of the potential hazards and ways that you can avoid exposure. The intent is to provide a safe work environment for you; to prevent the spread of a virus in the office and within your families; and to ensure our company's financial security, which is important to all employees.

Every staff member has a responsibility to themselves and fellow employees to take action to prevent the influx and spread of influenza in the workplace. You will be required to follow this disaster plan in the event of a pandemic outbreak.

This emergency policy will go into effect in the event of an influenza pandemic outbreak. All staff members are required to abide by this policy when directed by the company president or chief executive officer.

## **COMPANY PANDEMIC INFLUENZA EMERGENCY PLAN**

Employees' risk of occupational exposure to influenza during a pandemic may vary from high to medium, or low risk. The level of risk depends in part, on whether jobs require proximity to people potentially infected with the influenza virus. Lower exposure risk occupations are those that do not require workers to be in contact with people known to be infected with the virus or frequent close contact (within six feet) of the public.

Our company will implement a national emergency sick leave policy for employee compensation and sick leave that will be administered by company executives in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO:

- ▶ Protect employees from contracting influenza in the workplace.
- ▶ Provide employees with adequate financial security by enabling them to work in the office safely or work from home.
- ▶ Provide continuation of services during the national emergency.

**Stay at home.** During a pandemic influenza outbreak, as determined by the state or federal government, employees who have flu-like symptoms (fever, dry cough, sore throat, sore muscles, stuffy/runny nose, headache) are required to stay at home. Use your provided sick leave and see your doctor. It is important to your health and to your family, friends and other employees that you seek medical attention within the first couple of days. Do not come to work where you could expose other employees and their families. For the sake of staff members and their families, employees who enter the company office or arrive at a jobsite with flu-like symptoms will be immediately sent home.

**Absenteeism policy.** There are no legal requirements for paid sick leave beyond the normal company sick leave policy. If you have used all of your sick leave for the year and have no more paid time off, including vacation time, the company is not obligated by law to provide sick pay. Our company leadership realizes that everybody will need financial security during a national emergency, therefore during a pandemic outbreak, our executive leaders will take the situation under consideration and develop a flexible sick-leave policy. The worse-case scenario is that unpaid sick leave without reprisal will be available during a pandemic outbreak.

**Remote work opportunities.** Some employees may be capable of performing most or all work assignments from home in the event of an outbreak. Working at home will reduce your potential exposure to influenza and allows employees to care for children or, possibly, a sick family member. Our company leadership will discuss the potential to work from home with each employee.

**Flu-prevention supplies.** Supplies in the form of disposable gloves, N-95 particulate respirators, antibacterial hand sanitizer and tissues — as well as disinfectants, antibacterial cleaning supplies and disposable towels for cleaning work surfaces — will be stockpiled by the company for your use while working in the office, should the need arise. All staff members will be instructed on their use.

**Cleaning procedures.** Increase current cleaning and maintenance of the building and all frequently touched surfaces. Make sure disinfectants and antibacterial supplies are being used.

**Visitors.** To protect our employees, we ask that only visitors involved in business-critical work visit our office. It is expected that the majority of meetings can be held over the phone and if not, should be rescheduled accordingly.

**Training.** All staff members will receive training in reference to this policy and exposure control. This training will include the signs and symptoms of influenza virus; how to prevent exposure and transmission of viruses; the reasons for staying home from work when sick; and how to use the influenza safety supplies.

**Travel policy.** All travel activities will be terminated and future travel activities postponed until the pandemic influenza outbreak is officially declared as “ended” by the government. As soon as an outbreak is declared, all company employees who are traveling will terminate activities, and are required to return to their homes as soon as it is reasonably possible. For the health and safety of these employees, there will be no exceptions to this requirement.

**Large meetings/events.** Events or large meetings will be postponed or canceled until the pandemic outbreak is officially declared as “ended” by the government. If possible, meetings may be held via conference call.

**Communication.** Communication with employees and customers will be of the utmost importance. We will communicate our plans of keeping our employees safe during the pandemic; updates about the pandemic; and how we will continue to provide our services to our customers in this difficult time.

## PANDEMIC FLU SPREAD AND PREVENTION

Flu viruses (seasonal and pandemic) are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks near a person (within 6 feet). The flu viruses are also known to be spread when a person makes contact with a contaminated surface such as an infected person’s hand, countertop, desk, telephone, keyboard and any other surface that respiratory droplets may contact and then the person touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others one day before the virus symptoms appear and up to five days after becoming sick. That means a person can pass on the flu to someone else before they know and while they are sick. Viruses can be spread very easily through an office, while commuting, in the home, while shopping and in any environment where people come together.

A pandemic virus will likely infect more people because few people have immunity to the pandemic flu virus.

## PREVENTION

There are common sense ways that people can reduce the possibility of an influenza infection:

- ▶ **Good hygiene.** Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and hot water frequently or by using 60 percent alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap is not available. Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes if your hands are not clean.
- ▶ **Practice cough etiquette.** Cover your mouth with a tissue and cough into the tissue. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands. Be sure to educate family members and children and make sure they have a supply of tissues handy or know how to cough into their elbow, not their hands.
- ▶ **Social distancing.** Reduce the frequency, proximity, and duration of contact between people. Working, commuting, shopping, etc. during off hours is also a form of social distancing. Stay clear of anybody who is coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ **Appliance controls.** Do not use another person’s telephone, keyboard, desk or appliances without first disinfecting the appliance or surface with an antiviral cleaning product.
- ▶ **Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** During an outbreak, wear a respirator and disposable gloves when you are in public or must be around environments where you could be exposed to persons who are, or may be, infected with a virus. If you think you are ill and must be around other people, wear a respirator so you do not spread the virus.
- ▶ **Stay home.** Stay home from work and away from other persons when you are ill or caring for an ill family member.

# SAMPLE PANDEMIC FLU POLICY

CONTINUED

- ▶ **See a doctor.** Seek professional medical attention as soon as you think you may be ill. The longer you wait the greater the chance of serious illness.
- ▶ **Flu shots.** Get your seasonal influenza vaccine, unless prevented to do so because of allergies or other health reasons.

Additional information regarding workplace and family safety in a pandemic can be found on this Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) website: [www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/index.htm)

*These steps do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations. This article is for general information only and is not intended to provide, and should not be relied upon, for ergonomic, training or medical advice in any particular circumstance or fact situation.*