

PANDEMIC PLANNING MEMBER / PARTNER GUIDE

Agility Recovery Solutions wants to ensure our members and partners are prepared for the effects of the H1N1 outbreak expected this fall. The following will serve as a guide to help your management team navigate through the potential issues that may arise as a result of a severe pandemic.

The swine flu outbreak in April 2009 proved a learning exercise for many companies across North America as contingencies were not made to account for the extreme health impact and containment strategies projected for a severe pandemic.

A business's most important asset is its employees, and the largest factor affecting daily operations during a pandemic is workforce absenteeism. A pandemic will likely reduce a significant number of available workers to these businesses, and to further complicate the issue, are those employees required to care for children at home due to illness or when schools are closed for extended periods. Business owners not only play a key role in protecting their employee's health, but also limiting the negative impact on their local economies by remaining operational during an interruption.

Business owners can follow a ten step process to help prepare their companies and employees for times of pandemic outbreak. These steps will help management identify key areas vital to the survival of their company should an interruption occur.



10 STEP PROCESS

1. MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT

- > Stay home if you are sick
- > Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes
- > Cover your coughs and sneezes
- > Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- > Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean
- > Try not to use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment

2. BE INFORMED

- > Provide education and training materials in an easy to understand format and in the appropriate language and literacy level for all employees
- > All information related to a potential outbreak should be credited by a reliable and expert source such as the Centers for Disease Control
- > Make all employees aware of CDC recommendations for obtaining the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available

3. COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND PROACTIVELY WITH EMPLOYEES

- > Provide workers with up-to-date information on influenza risk factors, protective behaviors, and instruction on proper behaviors
- > Establish a communication network via phone, email or text to reach employees remotely and provide up-to-the-minute information related to a potential outbreak
- > Conduct town hall meetings with employees, customers and the public as it relates to your business's pandemic plan

4. IDENTIFY A PANDEMIC TEAM

- > Identify key members of your organization responsible for the management of vital company functions
- > Members of the pandemic team will be responsible for implementing the company's contingency plan across all departments and disseminating information

5. IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

- > Identify critical functions and activities needed to facilitate near normal operations and survive as an economic entity
- > Identify primary and supporting functions based upon their impacts on providing essential goods and services for your business and the community

6. CROSS-TRAIN EMPLOYEES

- > Cross-train employees to perform essential functions in the absence of key management
- > Make arrangements to outsource critical functions with third party vendors, such as IT administration

7. PREPARE FOR TELECOMMUTING NEEDS

- > Plan to implement practices to minimize face-to-face contact between workers if advised by the local health department
- > Develop other flexible policies to allow workers to telework (if feasible) and create other leave policies, includes the distribution of tangible resources to employees' homes or remote locations

10 STEP PROCESS (CONTINUED)

8. DIVERSIFY YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

- > Develop a list of redundant vendors for key supplies
- > Make arrangements with 'backup' suppliers and vendors to obtain resources needed to facilitate critical operations and key functions
- > Maintain reliable utility services

9. UPDATE SICK, FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE POLICIES

- > Develop policies that encourage ill workers to stay at home without fear of any reprisals
- > Encourage your staff to stay home if they are feeling ill to reduce person-to-person contact
- > Recognize the emotional, mental, and physical needs of employees during a catastrophic health event

10. PREPARE FINANCIALLY

- > Encourage direct payroll deposits for all employees
- > Be prepared to handle large volumes of insurance claims
- > Decide the levels of accessible cash required to maintain business operations and to provide cash advances to employees

This process will serve as a guideline to enhance management's decision-making ability during periods of turmoil that can ensue following a pandemic disaster. Challenging vendors and suppliers to evaluate their own pandemic continuity plan also guarantees important resources are received or available in a timely manner without causing interruption in business operations. It is important to remember that no business is safeguarded from the potential impact of a pandemic outbreak, and management cannot fully prepare for such an event without the proper resources.

Preparing for a pandemic threat necessitates a shift in business continuity planning from one that anticipates a short-term, near-normal condition, to one that prepares for extreme long-term, catastrophic contingencies. Business owners or executive management must be prepared for a prolonged, limited workforce, communication difficulties among the workforce, and quarantined workspaces. A reputable and trusted business continuity solution can help these businesses re-prioritize and rapidly shift their efforts internally to sustain essential and critical functions, and ensure these disruptions are contained without resulting in business failure.

OTHER RESOURCES:

2009 H1N1 Flu Resources for Businesses and Employers

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/>

<http://www.flu.gov/professional/business/index.html>

CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers To Plan and Respond to the 2009–2010 Influenza Season

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/guidance/>

Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Businesses and Employers

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/toolkit/>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hotline

1-800-321-OSHA

What Employers Can Do to Protect Workers from Pandemic Influenza (OSHA)

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/employers-protect-workers-flu-factsheet.html>

CDC/NIOSH Occupational Health Issues Associated with 2009 H1N1 Influenza Virus

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/h1n1flu/>

Healthcare Workplaces Classified as Very High or High Exposure Risk for Pandemic Influenza

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/exposure-risk-classification-factsheet.html>

COVER YOUR COUGH

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

Stopping the Spread of Germs at Work

<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm>

Workplace Questions:

http://www.flu.gov/faq/workplace_questions/index.html

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