

## **10 STEPS YOUR BUSINESS CAN TAKE TO AVOID A PANDEMIC FLU OUTBREAK**

Here is what you can do now to maintain business continuity. Keep in mind that many strategies take time to implement.

- ✓ Check that existing business continuity contingency plans address long-term absenteeism rates. In particular, check to see if core business activities can be sustained over several weeks with only a minimal workforce available.
- ✓ Identify your company's essential functions, which might include accounting, payroll, and information technology, and the individuals who perform them. The absence of these individuals could seriously impair business continuity. Cross-train employees to perform essential functions to ensure resiliency.
- ✓ Plan for interruptions of essential governmental services like sanitation, water, power, and transportation, or disruptions to the food supply. For example, your employees might need back-up plans for car pools in case mass transit is interrupted.
- ✓ Determine which outside activities are critical to maintaining operations and develop alternatives in case they cannot function normally. For example, what transportation systems are needed to provide essential materials? Does the business operate on "just in time" inventory or is there typically some reserve?
- ✓ Update sick leave and family medical leave policies and communicate with employees about the importance of staying away from the workplace if they become ill.
- ✓ Establish or expand policies and tools that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access to applications.
- ✓ Collaborate with insurers, health plans, and major healthcare facilities to share you pandemic contingency plans and to learn about their capabilities and plans.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy work environment. Ensure adequate air circulation. Post tips on how to stop the spread of germs at work. Promote hand and respiratory hygiene. Ensure wide and easy availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizer products.
- ✓ Tell your employees about the threat of pandemic flu and the steps the company is taking to prepare for it. Establish an emergency communications plan and revise periodically. The plan should include key contacts (with back-ups), a chain of communications (including suppliers and customer), and the processes for

communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers and customers inside and outside the worksite in a consistent and timely way.

### **Protecting Employees' Health**

Flu is caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs, and is generally spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A vaccination against the pandemic flu – when it is available – will be the best way to prevent the disease. To fight the annual flu, members of high-risk groups should get a flu shot. Even those who are not in the high-risk categories should get a flu shot if enough vaccine is available; especially healthcare workers.

The following simple, common sense precautions can also help prevent the spread of all types of influenza. Recommended by the CDC, they should be communicated to your employees.

- ❑ **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- ❑ **Stay home when you're sick or have flu symptoms.** Get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed.
- ❑ **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- ❑ **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you against germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.
- ❑ **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- ❑ **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods, and avoid smoking, which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

Info taken from "Trust for America's Health"