

XVI. Talking Points on Pandemic Flu Preparedness

Is the threat of pandemic flu real?

- The threat of a flu pandemic is real.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading public health experts say it is not a question of IF a pandemic will occur, but WHEN it will occur.
- Experts are concerned that the H5N1 virus (bird flu) is changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.
- A flu pandemic could start anywhere and spread quickly.

Have there been flu pandemics in the past?

- There were three flu pandemics in the 20th century.
- The 1918–1919 flu pandemic overwhelmed the United States and the world, causing the deaths of at least 675,000 Americans and 50 million people worldwide.
- If a pandemic of similar severity occurred today, 90 million Americans could become ill, and nearly 2 million Americans could die.

Why do we need to prepare?

- Preparing *now* may make it easier for you and your family during a pandemic.
- During a pandemic, you may need or want to stay home for an extended period of time, and essential goods may be in short supply.
- If you do not prepare *before* a pandemic, it will be harder for you to follow important health advice *when* a pandemic occurs, such as staying home for longer periods of time.
- While the Government is working to improve vaccine development technology, there may not be a vaccine for 4-6 months once a pandemic starts.
- If everyone who *can* prepare *does* prepare, responders will be able to help more people, particularly those most in need, during a pandemic.
- The Government cannot do this alone. It's up to each of us to prepare at home, in the community, and at work.

How can we prepare?

- **Stock up** on food, medicines, and supplies to make it easier to stay at home:
 - Store nonperishable foods, water, and other necessities.
 - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends having a 2-week supply, but stocking up can take place over time.
 - Stocking up can also be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages.
 - Have a supply of over-the-counter and prescription drugs and other health supplies.
- **Improve your health habits *now*** to lower your risk of infection and slow the spread of disease during a pandemic:
 - Germs from the flu are spread from person to person by droplets from coughs and sneezes that move through the air to people nearby, or they are spread by touching surfaces that contain flu droplets.
 - Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
 - Sneeze and cough into a tissue or sleeve. Sneezing into your bare hands can spread the germs.

- **Plan** for what you will do if the following happens:
 - if schools are dismissed,
 - if you can't go to work, or
 - if a family member becomes sick and needs care.

How can you learn more?

- Go to www.pandemicflu.gov.
- Visit [[insert your intranet address, if applicable](#)]