



Office of Health, Safety and Security

Pandemic Influenza Be Informed. Get Prepared.

Experts predict a dire situation ahead in the event that avian influenza evolves into the next pandemic flu outbreak. They estimate that there could be as many as 80 million infected Americans, resulting in 800,000 deaths due to pandemic influenza. There have been three pandemic outbreaks in the last 100 years, and infectious disease experts believe that factors have developed alerting us to the next major influenza outbreak. [Avian influenza A \(H5N1\) virus](#), commonly known as "bird flu", is a strain of influenza that has caused illness and death among millions of domesticated poultry and migratory birds worldwide. This virus has infected people, but there has been no evidence of human to human transmission. There is concern however, that bird flu virus has the potential to mutate, resulting in a pandemic in humans. [Pandemic flu](#) occurs when a new strain of influenza virus, in this case H5N1, causes high numbers of severe illnesses and deaths, passing easily from person to person. Pandemic flu has the potential to travel across the U.S. in as little as three weeks.

All federal agencies are required to develop [pandemic influenza plans](#) to address worker health issues, maintain essential mission and function, support the Federal response and communicate information. All DOE staff and management should become familiar with [personnel policies](#) and COOP procedures. The Office of Illness and Injury Prevention Programs (HS-13) plays an integral role in DOE pandemic planning in cooperation with the NNSA COOP Coordinators. The office has developed a pandemic flu awareness website <http://www.hss.energy.gov/HealthSafety/avian.html> with easy to read educational materials, as well as links to other sources of information.

As DOE prepares for a possible pandemic, you have an individual responsibility to [prevent flu infection](#). The most effective public health measure is simple [hand washing](#) and appropriate methods to cover sneezes and coughs. It is expected that basic supplies that we take for granted, such as food, water, and electricity, may be in short supply due to high worker absenteeism. Being knowledgeable and proactive can make a significant difference in the impact of a pandemic on you and your family. [Preparation](#) for pandemic influenza is similar to emergency planning for a natural disaster like a hurricane or flood. Families should have food, water, and other necessities stockpiled at home. Preparation should also include a communication plan that is shared with all family members.

Dr. Bonnie Richter, Director, HS-13 is meeting with various offices within DOE, as well as high schools and community groups to share information about pandemic influenza and steps you can take to protect yourself and your family. If you would like Dr. Richter to meet with your organization please contact her at bonnie.richter@hq.doe.gov.