



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES



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H1N1 Influenza Guidance for New Hampshire Businesses

I. Introduction

The recent reports of H1N1 influenza serve as a constant reminder that an influenza outbreak is a genuine threat requiring plans for preparedness and response. The impact of this outbreak could have significant effects on the health and well being of New Hampshire citizens, and consequently to the State's workforce. Employers play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety during an influenza outbreak, as well as in limiting the impact on the economy and society.

To accommodate the lack of or inability to re-allocate resources that may occur in an outbreak, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) previously recommended that State agencies, as well as private businesses, develop plans for protecting employees and maintaining operations. Many New Hampshire businesses developed these plans, known as Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), at that time. COOPs will help ensure that the essential services provided by the State of New Hampshire and private businesses are maintained with efficiency throughout the H1N1 influenza outbreak.

II. Specific Infection Control Measures

A. Hand & Respiratory Hygiene

Agencies should have available those supplies necessary for maintaining proper hand and respiratory hygiene among employees. This would include:

- Where sinks are available, non-antimicrobial hand-washing soap with access to warm water and disposable towels
- Conveniently located waterless hand sanitizer (60% alcohol-based hand rub)
- Tissues
- No-touch receptacles for tissue disposal

Businesses may encourage hand washing and employees covering their mouths when coughing or sneezing by placing posters from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm>) throughout their offices. For maximum effect, posters should be placed in highly trafficked, visible areas of the workplace, and also rotated frequently.

B. Environmental Cleaning

In addition to keeping hands clean and covering coughs, agencies may also reduce employees' health risks by consistently performing and promoting environmental cleaning of commonly used workspaces and surfaces. These include:

- Computer workstations and desks
- Telephones
- Fax machines
- Copiers
- Meeting tables
- Other commonly used items, such as door knobs/handles, refrigerators, water coolers, light switches, faucets and elevator controls

For cleaning and disinfecting surfaces from influenza viruses, the CDC recommends using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Label instructions should always be followed when using any of these disinfectants. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix ¼ cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water. Agencies may wish to consult their Information Technology (IT) Department to determine the best method for disinfecting keyboards and other parts of a computer workstation.

C. Social Distancing

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend “social distancing” as the basic tool for preventing the spread of influenza in community settings such as workplaces. This means individuals should physically distance themselves from one another. With H1N1 influenza, a distance of greater than 6 feet is appropriate, though this recommendation may be altered as more information regarding the H1N1 virus is gathered. Methods by which businesses may achieve social distancing include but are not limited to the following:

- Allow employees to work from home; use telecommuting, where employees can call in to the workplace rather than be physically present
- Limit in-person group meetings. Instead allow for conference calls and videoconferencing. When in-person meetings are imperative, arrange seating so as to distance meeting participants
- Modify layout of workplace
- Extend work hours to accommodate shifts rather than have all employees at work during the same time period; stagger lunch hours and breaks
- Close buildings to non-essential visitors

III. Employee Education and Communication

An integral part of maintaining a healthy work environment is for agencies to properly educate their employees on all of the above-mentioned recommendations, in addition to situation updates and the current status of the outbreak. Education can take place through agency trainings, emails, posters, and other means of communication.

IV. Human Resources Considerations

Consider a sick leave policy that does not penalize sick employees, thereby encouraging employees who have influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, or upset stomach) to stay home so that they do not infect other employees. Recognize that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them. Work with your employees and their union(s) to address leave, transportation, travel, childcare, absence and other human resource issues.

V. Additional Resources:

NH DHHS website: www.dhhs.state.nh.us

CDC's Stopping the Spread of Germs at Home, Work & School:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm>