



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

TO: All USDA Employees

FROM: Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

SUBJECT: 2009 H1N1 influenza strain

*Tom Vilsack*  
5/1/09

As suspected and confirmed cases of the 2009 H1N1 influenza strain continue to be reported, I want to share some information and thoughts that you may find useful during this time.

Informing yourself ahead of time about what to do should this influenza appear in your community is important to minimizing your risk. A very good source of information is found on our Department website at [www.usda.gov/da/beprepared](http://www.usda.gov/da/beprepared). In addition to a link to the Center for Disease Control website, we have also posted "Frequently Asked Questions about H1N1." This will answer any questions you, your family, friends, or neighbors might have about eating and handling pork.

You already know from all the media coverage about the importance of frequent hand washing; social distancing when appropriate; and staying home if you are sick. Various leave flexibilities may be available, such as telework, depending upon the situation. Please be sure to keep your supervisor informed of your status, so that the appropriate procedures can be put in place to cover critical services during any extended absences.

For supervisors and managers, now is the time to ask yourselves whether you are prepared to implement, if called upon to do so? Have you reviewed your pandemic plans, including the USDA Pandemic Planning Guidance, that were developed a couple of years ago, and discussed the plans with your staff? Have you ensured that your "calling trees," orders of succession, and delegations of authority are up-to-date? Managers and supervisors should also coordinate their plans with partners, stakeholders, and customers, as appropriate. Offices should take their lead on implementing their plans from information and guidance obtained from the local health authorities.

The Office of Personnel Management has some useful information for both employees and managers at <http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/index.asp>.

Thank you for your hard work and continuing dedication to providing quality service to the American public and our partners around the world.