

# State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

212 East Washington Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Post Office Box 7984  
Madison, WI 53707-7984  
Voice (608) 266-8005  
Fax (608) 267-0500  
E-mail: [gab@wisconsin.gov](mailto:gab@wisconsin.gov)  
<http://gab.wi.gov>



JUDGE MICHAEL BRENNAN  
Chairperson

KEVIN J. KENNEDY  
Director and General Counsel

---

**DATE:** September 18, 2009

**TO:** Wisconsin County Clerks  
Wisconsin Municipal Clerks  
City of Milwaukee Election Commission  
Milwaukee County Election Commission

**FROM:** Kevin J. Kennedy, Director and General Counsel  
Nathaniel E. Robinson, Elections Division Administrator  
Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

**SUBJECT:** Guidance: H1N1 Flu Pandemic and Possible Impact on the Conduct of Elections

We have been asked by clerks to provide information and guidance on the conduct of elections if an H1N1 Flu Pandemic occurs during any of the 2010 elections. The memorandum is intended to achieve this purpose.

The Government Accountability Board (Board) is dedicated to ensuring that local election officials have the guidance and tools necessary to conduct elections safely during a potential H1N1 virus pandemic. As the flu season approaches, the Board recognizes that preparedness is a shared responsibility. The Board advises all election officials to plan ahead, and take a proactive approach to dealing with a potential pandemic. If a flu pandemic occurs, it will likely be a prolonged and widespread outbreak that could require temporary changes in many parts of our everyday lives, including school, work, transportation, other public services and the conduct of elections.

The following information should be considered when planning for an H1N1 pandemic.

1. H1N1 Characteristics and Symptoms

The H1N1 virus is transmitted primarily through physical contact of the infecting germs. The symptoms of the new H1N1 flu virus are similar to those of the seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of sick people also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

2. County and Local Planning

- A. Current county/local election contingency plans should be reviewed in consultation with State and County health officials to include a section on an H1N1 pandemic for the upcoming election season.
- B. County and local election officials should establish contact and an open line of communication with emergency preparedness and health professionals. Many of

these health professionals will be able to provide you with advice on how to minimize the spread of the virus at a polling location on Election Day.

- C. Instituting strict safety procedures and protocols for the polling location on Election Day if an election is conducted during a pandemic. Some procedures and protocols that could reduce the spread of the virus:
- Establish a polling place safety station that includes pamphlets on H1N1 and how to prevent the spread of the virus, a good supply of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, surgical masks, and sterile latex gloves for use by voters;
  - Post appropriately worded signage at the entrance to polling location and voting area putting voters on notice that there currently is a pandemic, that voters should consider the safety of themselves and others before entering the polling location and encourage all voters to utilize the materials provided at the polling place safety station;
  - Consider increasing the number of workers at a polling location to assist with staffing a polling place safety station and to assist with the thorough cleaning of voting equipment and materials. Increasing the pool of prospective election workers in case workers themselves come down with the flu should also be considered.
  - Require thorough cleaning of all voting equipment and materials following contact by a voter. Election inspectors would use alcohol-based wipes to clean marking pens/pencils, voting booths, touch screens, tables and any other piece of equipment a voter used during the voting process.
  - Institute a public information campaign in the municipality that encourages voters to get the flu vaccination before Election Day;
  - Strongly encourage all election workers to confer with their health care provider to get the flu vaccination before Election Day;
  - Require all election officials to use surgical masks, sterile latex gloves and an alcohol-based hand sanitizer/wipes regularly on Election Day;
  - Institute a “3 foot” rule for voters standing in line to register to vote, receive ballots, vote ballots and submit ballots into a machine or ballot box. No one at the polling location should be closer than 3 feet to another person, including the election workers sitting at a table.
  - Ban all non-election related activities in the polling location that could promote congregation and close personal contact;
  - Supply biohazard disposable containers to dispose of all discarded cleaning materials and used masks and gloves.

### 3. Common Sense Hygiene Tips

Encouraging everyone to practice good, common sense hygiene tips could also go a long way in minimizing the spread of the H1N1 virus. Below are some common sense hygiene tips that you can share with election workers, other employees and the voting public.

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water, especially after using the restroom and before eating.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a wastebasket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or the crease of your elbow if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

#### 4. Government Accountability Board's Efforts

- A. In consultation with State health officials, the State Legislature and the Governor's Office, Board staff has begun exploring options for conducting elections should an emergency like a Statewide H1N1 pandemic occur.
- B. Some of the options the Board is currently exploring, include, but are not limited to:
  - All mail-in absentee voting for any election conducted during a pandemic;
  - Cancellation or delay of elections; and/or,
  - Mandated safety procedures for all polling locations.
- C. Board staff will continue to communicate with State health officials, and share any plans with election officials, if it becomes necessary.

#### 5. Resources

If you would like further information about the seasonal flu or the H1N1 virus and how to protect yourself and the voting public, listed below are several websites with excellent information.

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

<http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

Nate Judnic of our staff is our H1N1 Coordinator. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Nate at (608) 261-2023 or [nathan.judnic@wi.gov](mailto:nathan.judnic@wi.gov). Thank you.

cc: Nate Judnic, Elections Specialist  
Government Accountability Board