

Preparing for the Flu

(Including 2009 H1N1 Flu)

A Communications Toolkit for the Federal Workforce



Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for the Federal Workforce

The purpose of *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for the Federal Workforce* is to provide information and communication resources to help federal agencies and employees implement recommendations from CDC in planning and responding to the 2009–2010 Influenza Season.

The toolkit includes:

- ▶ **Questions and answers** about how federal agencies can respond to the 2009–2010 influenza season
- ▶ **Quick reference for federal agencies** on 2009–2010 influenza season planning and response
- ▶ **One fact sheet for federal agencies**
 - *Action Steps to Keep Your Federal Workforce Healthy*
- ▶ **Two fact sheets for employees**
 - *Ten Ways You Can Stay Healthy at Work*
 - *Five Things You Can Do to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu*
- ▶ **Three e-mail templates for federal agencies to send to employees**
 - *Flu Season is Starting. Get Ready Now!*
 - *If You Are Not Feeling Well*
 - *Staying Healthy*
- ▶ **Additional communication resources for federal agencies**
- ▶ **Additional Web resources for federal agencies**

Questions and Answers about How Federal Agencies can Prepare for and Respond to the 2009–2010 Influenza Season

Q. How does CDC's new flu guidance differ from previous guidance documents?

The new guidance applies to any flu virus circulating during the 2009–2010 flu season, not only 2009 H1N1 flu. It may be difficult at first to determine whether someone who is sick has 2009 H1N1 flu or seasonal flu since they present with a similar clinical picture and routine testing to identify the type of flu virus is not recommended. The guidance offers specific steps to ensure that employees are protected, and to maintain continuity of operations. It provides guidance for the current flu conditions as well as for more severe flu conditions.

This guidance also recommends that, based on current flu conditions, employees with flu-like illness stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel unusually warm or cold, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). This is a shorter time period than the previous guidance, which recommended that sick employees stay home for 7 days after symptoms began. The 7-day period would still be recommended in work settings under more severe flu conditions.

Q. Should all federal supervisors and employees follow this guidance?

The guidance is intended for federal agencies. *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for the Federal Workforce* includes specific information based on this guidance for federal supervisors and employees. The toolkit can be found at: www.flu.gov/professional/federal/workplace/index.html. Federal employees who care for sick people as part of their jobs will need to take additional steps to protect themselves because of their risk at work. Specific guidance for steps health care workers should take for 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu can be found at: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinicians and www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals.



Q. What other guidance or policies should be reviewed by the federal workforce to prepare for the 2009-2010 flu season?

In addition to this guidance, supervisors, and employees who work for the federal government should review:

- ▶ any agency documents specific to emergency planning.
- ▶ applicable provisions in collective bargaining agreements.
- ▶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Web site, which includes policies, questions and answers, and tools specific to pandemic flu at: www.opm.gov/pandemic.

Rationale for Planning

Q. Why is it important to plan for a flu response?

Federal agencies may have already been impacted by the spring 2009 H1N1 flu. Steps can be taken now to slow the spread of flu in the workplace. It is also possible that flu conditions may become more severe, so it is important to plan now for how to respond under those circumstances. Planning for a flu response will help continue and strengthen efforts to protect the federal workforce and ensure continuity of operations. A severe flu season could have a major effect on the global economy, including travel, trade, tourism, food, financial markets, and other types of businesses. Planning from the outset can help protect your agency and your employees if flu conditions become more severe. Planning can help:

- ▶ minimize disruption to government activities,
- ▶ protect employees' health and safety, and
- ▶ limit the negative impact to the community, economy, and society.

Q. Why should we be concerned about the spread of flu in the workplace?

The workplace may act as a “point of spread,” where employees can easily spread flu to their fellow employees as well as to others in the community. The flu can have a major impact on continuity of operations, causing employees to stay home because they are sick or because they need to care for sick family members. They may also need to stay home and take care of their children, if schools dismiss students or early childhood development programs close. The guidance and this toolkit provide steps that supervisors and employees may take to minimize the spread of flu in the workplace.

How to Plan and Prepare

Q. What should federal agencies do to prepare?

- ▶ Review current pandemic and/or emergency plans or develop a new plan.
 - Conduct an exercise, drill, or discussion to test key components of the agency's plan.
 - Share the plan and communicate with employees to explain what policies, leave options, pay, telework, and benefits may be available to them. Consult with human resources offices as needed.
- ▶ Review relevant agency and government-wide human resources policies and practices.
- ▶ Develop human resources management strategies to deal with human resources issues that may arise during a flu response.
- ▶ Review your collective bargaining agreement and specific policies, leave options, telework, and other options that may be available to employees.
- ▶ Consult with human resources offices as needed.
- ▶ Secure and maintain updated telephone contact information for all employees. Review and update your list of mission critical/essential employees and make sure that employees understand their roles and responsibilities during emergencies. Add a “widget” or “button” to your Government web page or employee website as a means of providing your employees with the latest information on the flu:
www.cdc.gov/widgets
www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/H1N1/buttons.html
www.hhs.gov/web/library/hhsfluwidgets.html
www.flu.gov/news/socialmedia

Q. What should be included in a federal agency flu response plan?

OPM has issued guidance on pandemic planning which can be found at:

www.opm.gov/pandemic. The guidance is designed to help federal departments and agencies achieve two important goals—(1) protecting the federal workforce and (2) ensuring continuity of operations. Federal agencies should demonstrate to the American people that they can have confidence that the federal government will be able to carry out its mission, especially in an emergency. For this reason, the OPM guidance emphasizes the need to carry on the essential work of the government through whatever means are available. This may include:

- ▶ voluntary telework arrangements,
- ▶ the designation of an employee's home (or alternative worksite not under government control) as a “safe haven” for evacuation during a pandemic,
- ▶ the assignment of any work necessary or required to be performed during the period of evacuation, and

- ▶ authorizing “evacuation payments” to protect employees’ pay if standard time and attendance procedures cannot be followed due to illness during flu season.

OPM does not anticipate the need for widespread use of excused absences (i.e., “administrative leave”), which should be considered a last resort during a flu response. Departments and agencies should consult OPM’s guidance on excused absence, and if and when the need arises, OPM will publish a consistent government-wide policy on the use of excused absences for flu response.

Q. What leave options are available for federal employees?

An important way to reduce the spread of flu is to keep sick people away from those who are not sick. With this in mind, employees who have flu-like symptoms should be encouraged to contact their supervisors to request leave in accordance with leave regulations, policies, and practices. Once approved, employees should **stay home** and not come to work until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or is sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). It is possible that employees will need to take care of sick household members or care for children if schools are dismissed or are closed.

The federal government offers several leave options: sick leave; sick leave for an employee exposed to a communicable disease; sick leave to care for family members who are sick or need medical examination; sick leave for bereavement; sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition; annual leave; advance annual and/or sick leave; leave without pay (LWOP) as approved by the agency or as authorized under the Family and Medical leave Act (FMLA); excused absence (administrative leave) in limited circumstances; donated leave under the voluntary leave transfer program, voluntary leave bank program, or emergency leave transfer program; other paid time off such as compensatory time off, compensatory time off for travel, or credit hours.

Supervisors should also encourage telework and alternative work schedules to help prevent the spread of flu in their workplace. This will allow employees to continue to work or function while limiting contact with others, help maintain continuity of operations, and help employees manage their health and their family’s needs. Before approving a particular leave option, federal supervisors should review applicable policies set forth in collective bargaining agreements and agency-specific human resource guidance.

Q. Must an employee have a doctor’s note if requesting to use sick leave?

As the 2009/2010 flu season progresses, we would like to draw attention to the fact that agencies have the option of approving sick leave or Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave (if it is raised to the level of a serious health condition as defined in 5 CFR 630.1202) for employees with flu-like illness without requiring a doctor’s note or other medical certification. Under OPM’s sick leave regulations at 5 CFR 630.403(a), an agency

may grant sick leave only when the need for sick leave is supported by administratively acceptable evidence. The regulations go on to say that an agency may consider an employee's self-certification as to the reason for his or her absence as administratively acceptable evidence, regardless of the duration of the absence. An agency may also require a medical certificate or other administratively acceptable evidence as to the reason for an absence for any of the purposes for which sick leave is granted for an absence in excess of three workdays, or for a lesser period when the agency determines it is necessary. The Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) can be invoked if the employee or his/her family member has a serious health condition. If FMLA leave is taken, an agency may require medical certification, under 5 CFR 630.1207, but is not required to do so. Federal supervisors and employees should review applicable provisions in collective bargaining agreements and agency documents concerning medical documentation. Supervisors must use their best judgment and follow their agency practices for granting sick leave.

Q. Must an employee use leave if they have the flu?

If you have flu-like symptoms, need to care for a member of your household, or have general questions about using leave options or arranging off-site work alternatives, please contact your supervisor or your agency's human resources office.

To reduce the spread of flu in the workplace, CDC recommends that employees who develop flu-like symptoms stay at home and not come to work until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or is sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). To make it as easy as possible for employees who have flu-like symptoms to stay home, employees and supervisors should discuss teleworking from home, alternate work schedule options, and the leave and time-off options that may be available.

Leave options include sick leave, sick leave to care for family members who are ill or need medical examination, sick leave for bereavement, sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, annual leave, advance annual and/or sick leave, leave without pay (LWOP) as approved by the agency or authorized under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), excused absence (administrative leave) in limited circumstances, and donated leave. Other paid time off options include compensatory time off, compensatory time off for travel, and credit hours.

See OPM's *Planning for Pandemic Influenza: Human Resources Information for Agencies and Departments* at www.opm.gov/pandemic/OPM-Pandemic_AllIssuances.pdf for more information.

Steps for the Federal Workforce under Current Flu Conditions

Q. What steps can federal supervisors take to keep employees from getting sick?

Federal supervisors should take the following steps under current flu conditions to keep employees from getting sick with flu.

- ▶ **Encourage respiratory etiquette** by providing:
 - education and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, and
 - easy access to tissues and trash cans.
- ▶ **Encourage hand hygiene** by providing:
 - education and reminders about washing their hands, and
 - easy access to running water and soap. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used.
- ▶ **Encourage employees to request leave if they are sick so they can stay home** for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm or cold, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- ▶ **Encourage employees who become sick at work to go home.** Remind employees to notify their supervisors and discuss leave options.
- ▶ **Routinely clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact** with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- ▶ **Encourage sick employees at higher risk of complications from flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.** Taking antiviral medicines early might prevent severe complications from the flu, such as hospitalization or death. People at higher risk for flu complications include pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes).
- ▶ **Discuss options with employees to ensure continuity of operations in the event that employees need to stay home.** Employees may need to stay home because they are sick, need to care for sick household members, or because schools have been dismissed and they need to care for their children. Consider cross-training staff to perform essential functions or offering options for telework.
- ▶ **Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Also encourage employees who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). Please see www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm for more information about higher risk groups. Employees should be encouraged to review their health benefits coverage.

- ▶ **Provide information to employees overseas about what to do if they become sick.** *Planning for Pandemic Influenza* provides more information to supervisors and employees working overseas. This guidance can be found at: www.opm.gov/pandemic. In addition, health information for travelers can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Q. What can a federal supervisor do if an employee appears to be sick at work?

- ▶ Supervisors may express general concern regarding the employee's health and remind the employee of his or her leave options for seeking medical attention, such as requesting sick or annual leave. A supervisor may encourage an employee to go home if he or she is not feeling well. If the employee has no leave available, supervisors are authorized to approve requests for advanced leave or leave without pay in certain circumstances.
- ▶ When leave options are not practical and the employee is able to work, a possible alternative may be to allow the employee to work from home, either under a voluntary telework agreement, or in accordance with the agency's policy on telework and any applicable collective bargaining agreement. The feasibility of working from home is dependent on several factors, including the nature of the employee's duties, the availability of any necessary equipment (personal computer, etc.), and computer and communication connectivity. Supervisors should check with their HR office from time to time for the latest agency policy on flexibilities.
- ▶ As a means of preventing the spread of the flu, supervisors are strongly encouraged to remind employees to stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm or cold, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).

Q. What is the best way to practice good hand hygiene?

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Be sure to wash both sides of the hands, between fingers and under the nails. That is the best way to keep your hands from spreading the virus.

If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand rub. Alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol are a good alternative to soap and water. After applying the hand cleaner, rub hands until dry. If you cannot wash your hands with soap and water and do not have an alcohol-based hand rub, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful.

Visit www.cdc.gov/cleanhands for more information on hand hygiene.

Q. How long should a sick employee stay home?

Under current flu conditions, employees with flu-like symptoms should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). The sick employee may decide to stop taking fever-reducing medicines as he or she begins to feel better and should continue to monitor his or her temperature until it has been normal for 24 hours.

If flu conditions become more severe, the sick employee should stay home for up to 7 days. An employee who is still sick after 7 days should stay home until 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away. The local and state health department where federal operations are located will help determine if the recommendation should be changed.

Unless medical care is needed, sick employees should stay at home to avoid contact with others. This may help reduce the number of people who get infected with the flu virus.

Q. Should an employee with a sick household member stay at home, too?

No, an employee with a sick household member may go to work. It is especially important that these employees monitor themselves for illness.

Employees with school-aged children may need to stay home to care for their children. Supervisors should review leave policies for the flexibility to allow employees to stay home if they need to care for their children or other household members who are sick. Read OPM's *Pandemic Influenza 2009: Questions & Answers* for more information at: www.chcoc.gov/Transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=2452.

If flu conditions are more severe, CDC guidance for school-aged children is that they should stay home for five days from the time someone in their home became sick. However, this guidance does not apply to adults.

See www.flu.gov/professional/school/index.html for more information on guidance for children in school or early childhood development programs.

Q. What are fever-reducing medications?

Fever-reducing medications are medicines that contain acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (such as Motrin®). These medicines can be given to people who are sick with flu to help bring their fever down and relieve their pain. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers (anyone 18 years old and younger) who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

Q. Can the flu virus live on surfaces, such as computer keyboards?

Studies have shown that flu virus can live on hard objects up to 8 hours. Flu viruses may be spread when a person touches a hard surface (such as a desk or doorknob) or an object (such as a keyboard or pen) where the virus has landed and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Routine cleaning of surfaces will help stop the virus from spreading in this way.

Routinely clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact (such as hand rails or door knobs) with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Symptoms

Q. How do I know if someone has 2009 H1N1 flu or seasonal flu?

It will be very hard to tell if someone who is sick has 2009 H1N1 flu or seasonal flu. Public health officials and medical authorities will not be recommending laboratory tests. Anyone who has the symptoms of flu-like illness should request leave from their supervisors. Once approved, employees should stay home and not return to work until they are free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines.

The symptoms of seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu virus include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Q. How do I recognize a fever or signs of a fever?

A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). Signs of a fever include feeling very warm, having a flushed appearance, sweating, or shivering.

People at Higher Risk for Complications

Q. Who is at higher risk for complications from flu?

Anyone (even healthy people) can get the flu (seasonal and 2009 H1N1), and anyone can have serious problems from the flu. Some groups are at higher risk for complications from the flu. These include children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people 65 years of age and older are more likely to get complications from the flu.

Q. What should a pregnant employee do to avoid getting sick with flu?

Pregnant women should follow the same guidance as the general public about staying home when sick, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and routine cleaning.

Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from flu and, like all people at higher risk, should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible if they develop flu-like symptoms. Early treatment with antiviral flu medicines is recommended for pregnant women who have the flu; these medicines are most effective when started within the first 48 hours of feeling sick. See www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/pregnancy/antiviral_messages.htm for more information.

Pregnant women should know that they are part of the first priority group to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. Seasonal flu vaccine is also recommended for pregnant women and can be given at any time during pregnancy.

Steps for the Federal Workforce under More Severe Flu Conditions

Q. What additional steps should federal supervisors take if the flu becomes more severe?

In addition to the steps that supervisors should take under current flu conditions, federal supervisors and employees should consider adding the following steps if flu conditions become more severe.

- ▶ **Consider active screening of employees who report to work, where health practitioners are present at the worksite.**
At the beginning of the workday or the beginning of each shift, ask all employees about flu-like symptoms and those with symptoms should be encouraged to go home.
- ▶ **Extend the time sick employees stay home to at least 7 days.** People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, even if they feel better sooner.
- ▶ **Try to change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications** to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, or stay home, if feasible. These employees should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider. People at higher risk for flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes).
- ▶ **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in the workplace, if possible (see next question).

- ▶ ***Prepare for school dismissal or closure of early childhood development programs.*** School dismissals and closure of early childhood development programs are more likely when flu conditions are more severe. Be prepared to allow employees to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed.
- ▶ ***Provide guidance to employees who are traveling overseas on what to do if they become sick.*** Also provide information about possible travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers leaving other countries for the United States. Health information for travelers can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Q. What can federal agencies do to increase social distance during a more severe flu outbreak?

During a severe flu outbreak social distancing may be required. Supervisors should think creatively about ways to increase the space between employees, while maintaining government operations. Some options for social distancing are:

- ▶ cancelling non-essential face-to-face meetings and trying conference calls or Internet-based meetings instead,
- ▶ cancelling non-essential business travel, and
- ▶ offering telework options for employees.

Q. How will the federal workforce know if the flu is more severe and if they should consider taking additional action steps?

CDC and its partners will continue to monitor the spread of flu, the severity of the illness it's causing, and whether the virus is changing. State and local health departments will also be on the lookout for increases in severe illness in their areas and will provide guidance to their communities. Employees should visit www.flu.gov for the most up-to-date information about the flu. HHS will work closely with OPM and CDC to communicate changes in severity and the extent of flu-like illness to ensure that agencies have the information they need to choose the right steps to reduce the impact of the flu.

**Quick Reference for
Federal Agencies**

Quick Reference for Federal Agencies on 2009-2010 Influenza Season Planning and Response

Local flu conditions will influence the decisions that local public health officials will make regarding community-level strategies to lessen the spread of flu. Know where to get timely and accurate information that can guide your responses in each location where your operations reside. Be prepared to use multiple measures to protect workers and ensure continuity of operations. Announcements on the status of government operations will be available at www.opm.gov/status/index.aspx. Recorded messages on operating status also will be provided by OPM's Office of Communications and Public Liaison at (202) 606-1900. Announcements on the status of Government operations outside of the Washington, D.C., area will be handled individually by each agency and employees should be aware of their agency's operating status notification procedures.

Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in Spring/Summer 2009)

Sick employees should stay home.

People with symptoms of flu-like illness¹ should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever² without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.

Encourage an employee to go home if he or she is not feeling well.

Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day should be encouraged to go home after discussing leave options with a supervisor.

Encourage your employees to wash their hands often.

Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes.

Communicate the importance of covering coughs and sneezes and provide tissues and no-touch wastebaskets.

Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.

Clean surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu, and employees at higher risk for flu complications to get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to them.³

¹Symptoms of influenza-like illness include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.

²Fever is usually described as 100°F [37.8°C] or greater.

³For information on groups prioritized for seasonal flu vaccines see www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm. Different groups are prioritized for 2009 H1N1 flu, for more information see www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.



Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (continued)

Encourage sick employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.

Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, like pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, should check with their health care provider promptly, if they become sick. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.

Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that operations can continue.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps.

Advise workers to check for signs of flu-like illness before traveling, to notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling how to seek health care if they become sick and need care. If employees become sick during travel, they should stay in their hotel room, until 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine, unless they are seeking medical care.

Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or temporary closure of early childhood development programs.

Allow workers to stay home to take care of their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed. Encourage your employees with children to plan for child care alternatives if possible.

Additional Action Steps to Consider Under Conditions of Increased Severity (compared to Spring/Summer 2009)

If flu conditions become more severe than that of spring/summer 2009, there may be even higher employee absenteeism and a need to add additional protective measures. Consider the following measures if flu conditions are more severe and use them along with the action steps above.

Consider active screening of employees who report to work, where health practitioners are present at the worksite.

At the beginning of the workday or the beginning of each shift, ask all employees about flu-like symptoms¹ and those with symptoms should be encouraged to go home.

Consider alternative work arrangements for employees at higher risk for complications of flu during periods of increased flu activity in the community.

When possible, change work duties, work location, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications to reduce the number of exposures to people that may have flu. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home or stay home, if feasible.

Increase social distancing in the workplace.

Avoid crowded work settings, cancel large business-related face-to-face meetings, space workers farther apart, cancel non-essential travel, promote teleworking, and use staggered shifts to have fewer workers in the workplace at the same time.

Advise employees about possible disruptions and special considerations while traveling overseas.

Travel restrictions may be enacted by some countries, which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while traveling. Plan ahead to limit non-essential travel and create contingency plans for employees on international travel.

Prepare for school dismissal or closure of early childhood development programs.

School dismissals and closure of early childhood development programs are more likely when flu conditions are more severe. Be prepared to allow workers to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed.

Other considerations.

Employers should be aware that the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu could change rapidly and local public health recommendations to communities and businesses could be revised quickly. Planners should identify sources of timely and accurate information so that they are aware of changes to recommendations and can promptly implement revised or additional measures.

**Fact Sheet for
Federal Agencies**

Action Steps to Keep Your Federal Workforce Healthy

Regardless of the size or type of your government operation, planning and taking action *now* can help ensure continuity of operations and help protect your employees from the flu.

Plan Now

- ▶ **Update employee emergency contact information.**
- ▶ **Review your current emergency plans or develop a new plan to ensure continuity of operations.** Share the plan and policies with your employees to make sure they understand their roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ **Review relevant agency and Government-wide human resource policies and practices.** Visit www.opm.gov/pandemic.
- ▶ **Develop human resource management strategies to deal with circumstances that may arise if flu conditions become more severe.**
- ▶ **Review your respective collective bargaining agreement and specific policies about leave options,** telework, and other flexible work plans that may be available to employees. Consult with human resource offices as needed.
- ▶ **Add a “widget” or “button” to your agency’s web page** or employee web site so employees can access the latest information on the flu:
 - www.cdc.gov/widgets
 - www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/H1N1/buttons.html
 - www.hhs.gov/web/library/hhsfluwidgets.html
 - www.flu.gov/news/socialmedia

Take Steps Now

Take steps now and continue during the flu season to help protect the health of your employees.

- ▶ **Promote hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes.** Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans and hand soap. Also provide alcohol-based hand rubs for use if soap and water are not available. Offer education on hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes in an easy-to-understand format and in appropriate languages. Go to www.flu.gov for more information.
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact** with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- ▶ **Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Also encourage employees who are recommended to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine to receive it when it becomes available. For more information about priority groups for vaccinations, visit www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/acip.htm
- ▶ **Encourage sick employees at higher risk of complications from flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.** People at higher risk for flu complications include pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). Taking antiviral medicines early might prevent severe complications from the flu, such as hospitalization or death.
- ▶ **Provide information to employees overseas** about what to do if they become sick.



- ▶ **Employees who are sick should request leave from their supervisors and once approved, stay home** until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). Make sure fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- ▶ **Employees who get sick at work should request leave from their supervisors and once approved, go home as soon as possible.**
- ▶ **Prepare for school dismissal or closure of early childhood development programs.** School dismissals and closure of early childhood development programs are more likely when flu conditions are more severe. Be prepared to allow workers to stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or early childhood development programs are closed.

Take Additional Steps if Flu Conditions are More Severe

The flu may become more severe and additional steps may be necessary to slow the spread of flu and maintain a healthy workforce.

- ▶ **Consider active screening of employees who report to work, where health practitioners are present at the worksite.** At the beginning of the workday or the beginning of each shift, ask all employees about flu-like symptoms and those with symptoms should be encouraged to go home.
- ▶ **Extend the time sick employees stay home to at least 7 days.** People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, even if they feel better sooner.
- ▶ **Try to change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications** to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, or stay home if feasible.
- ▶ **Plan to minimize face-to-face contact between employees.** Encourage the use of tele-work and alternative work schedules to reduce the number of employees who must be at the work site at the same time or in one specific location.
- ▶ **Provide guidance to employees who are traveling overseas on what to do if they become sick.** Also provide information about possible travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

**Fact Sheets for
Employees**

Ten Ways You Can Stay Healthy at Work

You can protect yourself and others by following these action steps:

- ▶ **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- ▶ **Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.** Germs spread this way.
- ▶ **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue**, or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash cans.
- ▶ **Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean**, such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
- ▶ **Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment.** If you need to use a coworker's phone, desk, or other equipment, clean it first.
- ▶ **Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home.** Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, tiredness, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever. CDC recommends that people with flu-like illness stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. If supervisors or employees have questions about use of leave for illness or to care for an ill family member, please contact your local Human Resources office or your office's leave administrator.
- ▶ **Get vaccinated against seasonal flu.** It can protect you against seasonal flu viruses, but not against 2009 H1N1.
- ▶ **Ask your doctor if you should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.** People recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available include health care workers, children, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). People living with or caring for infants under 6 months old should also be vaccinated to protect these children who are too young to be vaccinated. For more information about who should get vaccinated, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
- ▶ **Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, and exercise.**
- ▶ **Learn more. Visit www.flu.gov or contact CDC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:**
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov



Five Things You Can Do to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu

This fall we're not only facing seasonal flu, but also 2009 H1N1 flu. The Department of Health and Human Services is working together with the Departments of Homeland Security and Education to monitor the spread of the 2009 H1N1 flu and to prepare a voluntary fall vaccination program.

The most important steps to reduce the spread of the flu will take place in your homes, schools, and workplaces. Taking precautions for the 2009–2010 flu season is a responsibility we all share. Here are five basic steps to keep you and your family healthy and keep flu from spreading in your community. Visit www.flu.gov to learn more.

1. **Get yourself and your family vaccinated against seasonal flu as recommended.** Flu vaccines are the most important step in preventing flu and its complications. Different vaccines will be available this year: one for seasonal flu and one for 2009 H1N1. If you or a family member is recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, the seasonal flu vaccine or both, get vaccinated when it becomes available. For more information about priority groups for 2009 H1N1 vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm. For more information about seasonal flu vaccine, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/index.htm.
2. **Make prevention a primary line of defense.** Get in the habit of washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing to prevent the spread of germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available. Teach and remind your family to do the same. These steps are easy and work best if every member of the family participates.
3. **If you are sick, stay home from work and school.** If you're sick, stay home except to get medical care or other necessities until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38.7 degrees Celsius) or have signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). Make sure your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, which are any medicines that contain ibuprofen or acetaminophen. If you are concerned about your symptoms or are in a group at increased risk of severe illness, contact your health care provider. For more information on what to do if you get sick, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm.
4. **Start planning now.** Ask yourself these questions: If I am working and my child becomes sick, have I made arrangements for child care? Have I talked with my employer about what to do in case I need to be out sick or if I have to take care of a sick child or family member?
5. **Go to www.flu.gov for the latest information on 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu.** Flu.gov is a one-stop government-wide resource with planning tools to get a jump-start on the 2009–2010 flu season.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov



**Template Letters
(or E-mails) to
Send to Employees**

Flu Season is Starting. Get Ready Now!

- ▶ Visit www.flu.gov/professional/federal/workplace/index.html to customize a Microsoft Word version of this letter and to view more flu information to share with employees.
- ▶ Consider customizing this letter by using your agency's stationery or e-mail template and inserting a name and contact information of someone that employees can reach for flu questions.

Flu season is starting. Get ready now!

The flu season is starting and will last through the fall and winter. Both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu are expected to circulate, causing illness. More than one kind of flu virus will be spreading this season, including seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu. If you get the flu, you can get sick and spread the flu to others at home, at work, and in the community. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

If you feel you are getting sick at work, contact your supervisor to get approval for leave. Once approved, you should go home and rest. Stay at home until at least 24 hours after your fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do and no one else can do for you. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines, such as Tylenol®, which are any medicines that contain ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

If you feel ill at work, you are encouraged to request leave from your supervisor. Once approved, you should go home and rest.

Also remember to cover your coughs and sneezes and wash your hands often with soap and water (especially after coughing or sneezing). If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. If flu season conditions become more severe, we will take additional steps to avoid spreading the flu virus in the workplace.

You need to be prepared as well.

- ▶ Review your agency's pandemic response plan. *[provide information on how/where to do this]*
- ▶ Get the vaccine for seasonal flu as recommended. For more information, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>. *[insert information about vaccination clinics at the workplace or other ways your agency can support getting vaccinated for seasonal flu]*
- ▶ Get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available **if** you are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
- ▶ Make plans to be prepared to care for sick household members or for children if schools dismiss students or child care programs close.
- ▶ Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home. Have the following items on hand: a supply of fever-reducing medicines that contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and other items that may be useful and help you avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick.
- ▶ Learn about the flu and what you can do. To find out more about preparing for the flu, go to www.flu.gov call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

If you have any questions about policies or action steps we can take, please contact your supervisor or your human resources office.

By working together, we can protect our workforce while having a productive fall and winter.

If You Are Not Feeling Well . . .

- ▶ Visit www.flu.gov/professional/federal/workplace/index.html to customize a Microsoft Word version of this letter and to view more flu information to share with employees.
- ▶ Consider customizing this letter by using your agency's stationery or e-mail template and inserting a name and contact information of someone that employees can reach for flu questions.

If you are not feeling well . . .

How do you know if you have the flu? Do you have flu-like symptoms?

If you answered "yes" for flu-like symptoms, you may have the flu. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Please contact your supervisor and request leave approval. Once approved, please do NOT come to work if you are sick with flu-like symptoms.

Supervisors should encourage sick employees to stay home if they are sick with flu-like symptoms until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius), or free of signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the need for fever-reducing medicines, which are any medicines that contain ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

If you are at higher risk for complications from the flu and you are sick, contact your health care provider as soon as possible. Children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people 65 years of age and older, are more likely to get complications from the flu. If you are at higher risk for complications from the flu and you are sick, contact your health care provider as soon as possible. Your health care provider may prescribe antiviral drugs, and they are most effective when started within 2 days of getting sick.

In addition, emergency warning signs that the sick person needs **urgent medical attention** include the following:

- ▶ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- ▶ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- ▶ Sudden dizziness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

For more information about caring for someone sick with flu, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homecare.htm.

For more information, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

Contact [insert name, telephone, e-mail] if you have any questions.

Staying healthy . . .

- ▶ Visit www.flu.gov/professional/federal/workplace/index.html to customize a Microsoft Word version of this letter and to view more flu information to share with employees.
- ▶ Consider customizing this letter by using your agency's stationery or e-mail template and inserting a name and contact information of someone employees can reach for flu questions.

Staying healthy . . .

Important Actions to Take to Stay Healthy

- ▶ Every time you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and throw used tissues in the trash.
- ▶ Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze.
 - Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ▶ Wash your hands before and after preparing food or eating; after using the restroom; before and after touching your nose, eyes, or mouth; and after touching items that may have been exposed to bodily fluids.
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ▶ Get vaccinated for seasonal flu. For more information about seasonal flu vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm. [*insert information about vaccination clinics at the workplace or other ways your business can support getting vaccinated*].
- ▶ If you are in a group recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. For more information on priority groups, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
- ▶ If you are at higher risk for complications from the flu, talk to your doctor about what you will need to do if you get sick. People at higher risk for flu complications include pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes), and people 65 years of age and older.
- ▶ There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating the flu called "antiviral drugs." These drugs can make you better faster and may also prevent serious complications.
- ▶ Find healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety.

Contact [*insert name, telephone, e-mail*] if you have any questions.

For more information, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

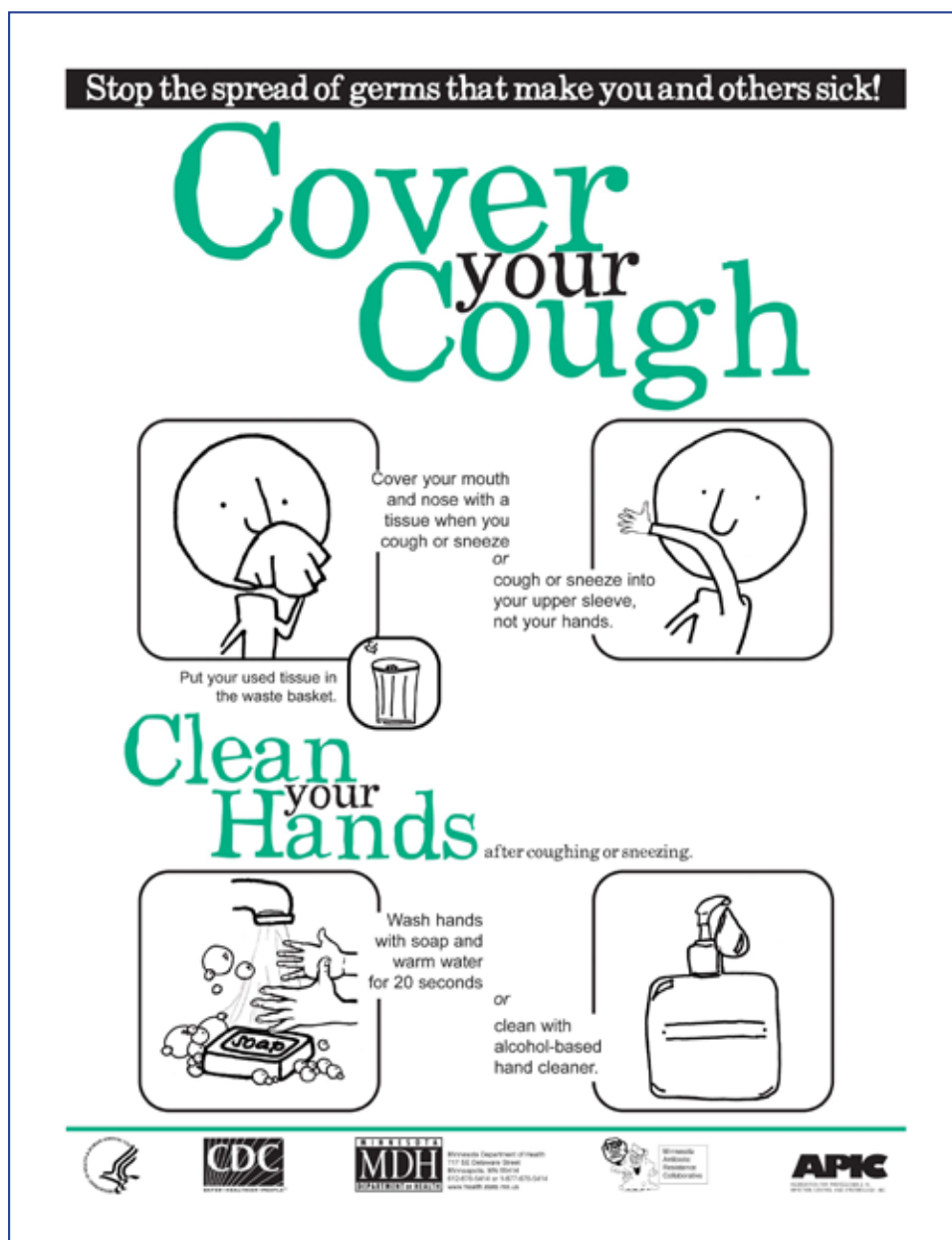
**Additional Communication
Resources for Federal Agencies**

Additional Communication Resources for Federal Agencies to Share with Employees

CDC Posters About Flu Prevention

Use the following posters and fact sheets in your offices, hallways, and around buildings to educate employees about ways to decrease the spread of flu.

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm (available in different sizes and languages)



Other Posters About Flu Prevention

www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/materials (includes other posters, brochures, buttons, stickers, and other materials)



CDC Fact Sheets and Other Materials About Flu Prevention for Employees

Stopping the Spread of Germs at Work

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm (available in English and other languages)

Stopping Germs at Home, Work, and School

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm (available in English and other languages)

2009 H1N1 Flu: Flyers and Other Print Materials

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/flyers.htm (includes brochures, flyers, fact sheets, and other materials about 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu)

Widgets

A widget is an application that displays the featured content directly on your Web page. Once you've added the widget to your Web site, there's no maintenance required. When CDC.gov updates content, your site will be updated automatically. You will have up-to-date, credible health information on your Web page.

You can easily add a CDC widget to your Web page. Use CDC widgets to keep your employees informed about flu. When your employees click on the widget, your Web page displays the featured, up-to-date content.

CDC's flu widgets are available at www.cdc.gov/widgets. For more CDC social media tools, go to www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/h1n1.

Flu.gov widgets are available at www.hhs.gov/web/library/hhsfluwidgets.html.

For more Flu.gov social media tools, go to www.flu.gov/news/socialmedia.

Sample Widgets



**Additional Web Resources
for Federal Agencies**

Additional Web Resources

- ▶ **Information on 2009 H1N1 Flu and Seasonal Flu**
www.flu.gov
- ▶ **Flu Planning Tools and Guidance for Businesses and Employers**
www.flu.gov/professional/business/index.html
- ▶ **CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to the 2009–2010 Influenza Season**
www.flu.gov/professional/business/guidance.html
- ▶ **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Flu Web Site for Businesses**
www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu/index.html
Hotline: 1-800-321-OSHA
- ▶ **What Employers Can Do to Protect Workers from Pandemic Influenza (OSHA)**
www.osha.gov/Publications/employers-protect-workers-flu-factsheet.html
- ▶ **Health Care Workplaces Classified as Very High or High Exposure Risk for Pandemic Influenza**
www.osha.gov/Publications/exposure-risk-classification-factsheet.html
- ▶ **U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Planning for Pandemic Influenza—Human Resources Information for Agencies and Departments**
www.opm.gov/pandemic/OPM-Pandemic_AllIssuances.pdf
- ▶ **Occupational Health Issues Associated with H1N1 Flu**
www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/h1n1flu



