

DOECAST OF APRIL 28, 2009 SWINE FLU – INDIVIDUAL PREPAREDNESS

A new strain of influenza virus (swine flu, H1N1) has been isolated from ill patients in the United States and Mexico. The virus has caused mild flu symptoms in the United States, but in Mexico the symptoms are more severe and deaths have been reported. No deaths have been reported as a result of this strain in the United States. To date, 40 cases of flu due to the swine flu virus (H1N1) have been confirmed in California, Kansas, Ohio, Texas, and New York.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

You can get the swine flu by direct contact with pigs (but **NOT** by eating cooked pork products) or by contact with humans infected with this virus. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend the following guidance to prevent the spread of this flu:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand gel (if your hands are not soiled). Hand gels are available at DOE Headquarters' supply stores. Outside of Headquarters, please check site availability.
- Cover your sneezes and coughs. If you do not have a tissue nearby, cough or sneeze into your elbow. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth to reduce the risk of contamination.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, you should stay home.
- If you have symptoms consistent with the flu, call your doctor. If you are taking care of someone with flu-like symptoms, stay home for 24-48 hours to ensure that you do not become sick.
- Avoid contact with sick people.

It is recommended that you notify your occupational health clinic or supervisor if you think you have flu symptoms or have traveled to countries with confirmed swine flu cases. If you have a confirmed case of swine flu, you should inform your occupational health clinic or your supervisor.

CDC has issued an advisory against travel to Mexico. State and local health departments will determine the need for additional public health countermeasures, such as school closings depending on the number of cases and disease severity in a given area. Currently, there is no vaccine to protect against this new virus. There are two anti-viral drugs that are available by prescription for those who become severely ill or otherwise recommended by a physician.

Due to the evolving nature of this disease, information is rapidly changing. Updates can be read on the CDC Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>. For more information, contact your site occupational medical unit or DOE Headquarters: Bonnie Richter, PhD, MPH, Epidemiologist and Pandemic Influenza Coordinator (301-903-4501), or Michael Ardaiz, MD, MPH, CPH, Chief Medical Officer (301-903- 9910).