

Centers for Disease Control Recommendations for Businesses

WWW.CDC.org

Under Conditions similar to Spring/Summer 2009

Absenteeism will likely be higher than normal, and additional protective measures to slow the spread of influenza should be considered. The following are measures that should be considered for the coming flu season.

Sick persons should stay home

- Workers should be alert to any signs of fever and any other signs of influenza-like illness. Symptoms should be checked before reporting to work each day. Employees should stay home if they are ill. Employees who are ill should not travel while they are ill.
- CDC recommends that employees with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Sick employees should be expected to be out for about 3 to 5 days in most cases, even if antiviral medications are used.
- Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with influenza can go to work as usual. However, these employees should monitor their health every day, and notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill. ACRPC understands that more workers may need to stay at home to care for ill children or other ill family members than is usual.

Sick employees at work should be asked to go home

- **CDC recommends that workers who appear to have an influenza-like illness upon arrival or become ill during the day be promptly separated from other workers and be advised to go home.**
- Those who become ill with symptoms of an influenza-like illness during the work day should be:
 - Separated from other workers and asked to go home promptly.
 - When possible and if they can tolerate it, workers with influenza-like illness should be given a surgical mask to wear before they go home if they cannot be placed in an area away from others.
- If an employee becomes ill at work, inform fellow employees of their possible exposure in the workplace to influenza-like illness.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- Influenza viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. It is important to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or, in the absence of a tissue, one's sleeve.
- ACRPC will provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.

Improve hand hygiene

- Influenza may be spread via contaminated hands. Employees should wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers will be made available in the workplace. Hand sanitizers will be placed in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

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

- Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended.

Encourage employees to get vaccinated

- All employees should get vaccinated for seasonal influenza. For information on groups prioritized for seasonal influenza vaccines, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.
- All employees should also get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 influenza when vaccines are available to them. Different groups are prioritized for 2009 H1N1 influenza than for seasonal influenza. For information on groups prioritized for H1N1 influenza vaccine please see <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm>.

For employees who are at higher risk for complications of influenza:

- People at higher risk for complications from influenza include pregnant women; children under 5 years of age; adults and children who have chronic lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease, diabetes, diseases that suppress the immune system and other chronic medical conditions; and those who are 65 years or older.
- Some people are at higher risk of complications from influenza. Employees who are at higher risk for complications should check with their health care provider if they become ill. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

- Employees recommended for seasonal influenza vaccine and 2009 H1N1 vaccines should get vaccinated as soon as these vaccines are available.
- Employees who become ill and are at increased risk of complications from influenza and ill employees who are concerned about their illness should call their health care provider for advice. Their health care provider might want them to take antiviral medications to reduce the likelihood of severe complications from the influenza.

ACRPC expects increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members. It is possible that the office will remain closed due to absences.

- ACRPC plans to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Elevated absentee rates can be due to sick workers, those who need to stay home and care for others, or from workers with conditions that make them at higher risk for complications from influenza and who may be worried about coming to work.
- Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff is absent.
- Essential function of ACRPC includes availability for use as a resource by towns and other groups. In the event the office needs to be closed for an extended period of time due to illness, phones can be answered via machine or voice mail. A set schedule of answering machine monitoring should be developed to ensure the essential functions of the office are maintained.
- Remote operation of the office computers and remote access to the internet should be arranged in the event that is needed.
- Future purchases of office equipment will take the possibility of remote operations into account.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps

- Employees should check themselves for fever and any other signs of influenza-like illness before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are ill.
- Employees who will be traveling or on temporary assignment should take appropriate precautions to protect their health.
- Employees who become ill while traveling and are at increased risk of complications from influenza and others concerned about their illness should promptly call a health care provider for advice.

Prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or temporary closure of child care programs

- Although school dismissals or closures of child care programs are not likely to be generally recommended at this time, they are possible in some jurisdictions.

- Employees should stay home to care for children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed.
- Do not bring your children to work while schools are dismissed.
- Cross-train employees to cover essential functions.

If current levels of influenza increase:

Consider active screening of employees who report to work

- If influenza severity increases, at the beginning of the workday, all employees should be asked about symptoms consistent with an influenza illness, such as fever or chills AND cough or sore throat. If the severity or the impact of influenza increases, CDC recommends that persons with an influenza-like illness not go to work or travel and remain at home for at least 7 days, even if symptoms resolve sooner. Individuals who are still sick 7 days after they become ill should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. If influenza severity increases, CDC recommends that people stay home at least 7 days whether or not antiviral medications are used.
- The ACRPC sick leave policy is flexible and allows for employees to remain at home to care for themselves or family members.
- Check for signs of illness before reporting to work each day.
- Current employees should be cross-trained as much as possible to allow for absences due to illness.

Consider alternative work environments for employees at higher risk for complications of influenza during periods of increased influenza activity in the community

- Employees with an underlying chronic medical condition or who are pregnant should consider calling their health care provider for advice about how to reduce their risk of exposure to influenza and, if they get sick, how best to get early treatment for influenza.
- If influenza severity increases and if influenza transmission is high in the community, ACRPC may want to evaluate the office work environment to see how they can reduce the number of people that high-risk employees come in contact with. Options include:
 - Telecommuting from home.
 - Workers at higher risk for influenza complications should be reassigned to duties that have minimal contact with other employees, clients, or customers. If these workers cannot be reassigned duties to reduce contact with others, are concerned about their ability to avoid influenza at the workplace, or will be in crowded conditions at work or while commuting to work, then ACRPC allows employees at higher risk for influenza complications to stay home from work.

- CDC recommends that ill workers at higher risk of complications from influenza seek early treatment if they become ill.

Increased social distancing in the workplace

- Increase the physical distance between people in the workplace to reduce the spread of influenza. The goal should be for there to be at least 6 feet of distance between people at most times. This is not a simple or easy strategy and would typically require considerable flexibility. These measures may include avoiding crowded work settings, canceling business-related face-to-face meetings, spacing workers farther apart, canceling non-essential travel, increasing use of teleworking, and using staggered shifts to allow fewer workers to be in the workplace at the same time.⁹
- Review and develop policies for teleworking including an assessment of the capabilities and gaps of your current computer systems and availability of technical support. Take remedial steps if needed, and test your system in advance to assure it can handle an increase in remote users.
- Recommendations to increase social distancing may affect community functioning. Because supply chain issues may be affected, make sure you have plans for back-up suppliers.
- ACRPC advocates limiting unnecessary public meetings in the event of a more serious flu situation. Staff should take advantage of the possibilities of teleconferencing and remote public input methods such as web surveys, e-mail, and others to limit number of public exposure opportunities.
- In the event of a more serious flu situation ACRPC advocates the cancellation of public meetings including commission meetings, committee meetings, and similar gatherings in support of social distancing concepts.

Consider canceling non-essential business travel and advising employees about possible disruptions while traveling overseas

- If the severity of the outbreak increases in the fall or winter, public health officials may recommend social distancing strategies which include canceling non-essential travel.
- If influenza severity increases, travelers should also be prepared for travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers.

Prepare for school dismissal or closure of child care programs

- School dismissals and closure of child care programs are more likely at higher levels of severity. Workers should stay home to care for their children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed. If dismissal is needed, schools are being advised to dismiss students for at least 5 to 7 calendar days or longer if necessary.

- Employees who perform essential functions and who have children should plan for contingencies should local child care programs close or schools dismiss students.
- There may be prolonged absenteeism if schools dismiss students for an extended time.