



Influenza, or the “flu”, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by different strains of the virus. Each year the seasonal flu affects people throughout the world. In 2009, a new strain of influenza (2009 H1N1) caused the first influenza pandemic in more than 40 years. Business planning is essential to protect your employees’ health and safety and limit the negative impact the situation may have on both your business and community.

## Keeping Your Employees and Business Healthy

- **Encourage workers to get vaccinated.**
- **Provide resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene.**
  - Include access to tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants, and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.
- **Provide education and training materials appropriate for all employees.**
  - Provide workers with up-to-date information on flu risk factors, protective behaviors, and instruction on cough etiquette and hand hygiene.
- **Have surface items in your business cleaned routinely.**
  - This should include all frequently touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.
  - Provide disposable wipes so commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down before use.

## Prepare for a Pandemic Situation

- **Identify a pandemic plan coordinator.**
  - The coordinator will be responsible for dealing with pandemic flu issues and their impact on the business. Some of the duties would include:
    - Contacting the local health department/ health care provider to set up vaccination clinics for employees, if possible.
    - Developing a plan and protocol for ill employees.
- **Examine workplace policies.**
  - The “leave” policies should be flexible, well-communicated, and without punishment.
  - Employees who have flu symptoms should stay home and not come to work until at least 24 hours after fever.
  - Employees should be allowed to stay home and care for sick family members.
  - Be prepared to allow employees to stay home in the event of school closings.

- **Identify what is essential to the business.**
  - Determine the factors necessary to maintain business operations should there be interruptions due to a large number of influenza cases.
  - Address issues such as reduction in employees, business functions, and critical inputs (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services and products, logistics).
  - Explore ways you can continue business operations if there are supply chain breaks or other problems.
  - Cross-train employees to perform essential functions, such as accounting, payroll and information technology, in the event of large scale absences.
- **Keep everyone informed.**
  - Make sure employees are up-to-date on your pandemic plans and know your expectations.
  - Review the policies regarding absences, working from home, and compensation with all employees.
  - Stay informed about the situation at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- **Prepare continuity plans.**
  - In the event of significant absences, or changes in the way you need to conduct business, you need to have a plan so that you can maintain operations.
  - School closings and daycare closures may increase absenteeism.
  - Health officials may also advise increasing the distance between people and decreasing the frequency of contact among people to reduce the spread of illness.
- **Establish emergency communication plans.**
  - Make plans to communicate business status to employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.
  - Make plans on how to communicate with people that perform essential tasks to provide them assignments and work direction.
  - Update employee telephone rosters and records.

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