

EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR SWINE FLU (Influenza A H1N1 Virus) – Are you Prepared?

Public health experts are advising that the H1N1 flu that emerged in April is poised to hit with a vengeance much earlier than the regular seasonal flu – possibly as soon as the end of this month, when many of our schools reopen.

The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains a Global Epidemic and Pandemic Alert and Response (ERP) System to which they have identified our current state as a level 6 – indicating we are in a state of global pandemic. It is advised to pay close attention to what public health officials are saying and take it seriously – if they recommend social distancing we must do that in order to get the virus under control.

What does this mean for you?

Without a plan in place, you may jeopardize the ability for your business to continue operations or even to exist at all. Your organization could be faced with very high absenteeism rates during a pandemic influenza. Up to 50 percent or more of your workforce could be affected by the H1N1 through illness themselves or family members they need to care of.

Do you have the capacity to maintain service delivery during that time?

Can you afford to close your doors for a period of two to four weeks or more?

Response plans are necessary to ensure business continuity is maintained during a pandemic influenza. For this reason, your business should be planning ahead to ensure you have the capacity to maintain service delivery during that time.

As stated by the WHO, the H1N1 virus is the world's first pandemic in over 40 years and Canadian organizations must act quickly to prepare themselves for the next waves of the virus. While not everything is known about the H1N1 virus, it is expected that as time passes, the virus will spread with greater speed and virulence.

Amid reports of H1N1 virus outbreaks at summer camps and the prospect things could get worse this fall, more companies are being warned they need to prepare for a possible pandemic. The H1N1 virus is behaving differently than organizations expected. Even though the summer months are not usually hospitable to the influenza virus, H1N1 continues to spread quickly," said Trefor Munn-Venn, Director, National Security and Public Safety. "Hope is not an option for organizations – they should begin responding now. Those organizations that don't already have a plan need to recognize just how serious the pandemic is expected to be and start preparing both their staff and their businesses."

To reiterate what Munn-Venn stated above, the current situation means **organizations should start to plan** for this threat escalating in order to ensure, as far as is practicable, that **business operations can continue**. The exact impact of swine flu cannot be predicted accurately, making it essential that businesses plan in advance, rather than waiting until the outbreak escalates to the point where there will be very little time to take mitigating actions if time for any. None of us want to be in a position especially having come through the economic times of the past year to find we have to **close our doors** because we were **not prepared** for business continuity. Successful planning goes well beyond ensuring your employees wash their hands properly. **It's imperative to have a strategy from the boardroom to the shop floor that safeguards all operations of your business.**

RTS Consulting Inc. is ready to assist you in preparation of your pandemic plans, contingency plans and training of your staff now in preparation for the second wave of the H1N1 flu virus that is eminent in the coming months.

RTS Consulting Inc. has been a leader in providing environmental infection prevention and control in Ontario. During the SARS outbreak RTS provided respiratory fit testing (qualitative and quantitative) and respirator protection programs to several Ontario hospitals and industries.

Pandemic Planning and Corporate Contingency Planning along with training of your staff to ensure they are prepared and your business is prepared for the second wave of the pandemic that is inevitable, is high on our priority list – why not make it high on yours. Ensure that you will be in business tomorrow by planning your strategies on what to do when up to half your workforce or more are off work due to the virus – how will you survive!

Don't get caught unprepared – call today to arrange a consultation to discuss how we can assist you in preparing your **“Pandemic Contingency Plan”** and **“Training your Staff”** and to **order our Pandemic Planning Toolkit!** Take action today before it is too late!