



# ***DISASTER PREPAREDNESS***

**Business Planning Guide  
Seasonal / Pandemic Influenza**



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## **Seasonal / Pandemic Influenza**

Flu refers to illness caused by a number of different influenza viruses. Flu can cause a range of symptoms and effects, from mild to lethal. Flu symptoms may include fever, coughing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills and fatigue. Most healthy people recover from the flu without problems, but certain people are at high risk for serious complications. Those that are more at risk include children, individuals 65 years of age or older, pregnant women, and people with underlying chronic disease.

Annual outbreaks of seasonal flu usually occur during the late fall through early spring. In a typical year, approximately five to twenty percent of the population will get the flu. A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little to no immunity in the human population; the virus causes serious illness and spreads easily from person-to-person worldwide. During a pandemic, there will not be a vaccine immediately available; therefore, community strategies that delay or reduce the spread of the disease are critical. Non - pharmaceutical interventions are as simple as frequent hand washing, cough / sneeze etiquette, and frequent workplace disinfection.

Each flu season, the work place is a location where everyone can help stop the spread of influenza. In an influenza pandemic, businesses have a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as limiting the negative impact on the economy and society. As with any catastrophe, having a contingency plan is critical. This guide has been designed to assist business with planning efforts associated with continuing operations during a flu pandemic.



# Continuity of Operations: Issues That Should Be Addressed By Your Business

## 1. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your organization.

- Identify a pandemic coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. The planning process should include input from labor representatives.
- Identify essential employees, key positions, and other critical inputs (e.g. materials, suppliers, sub-contractors, products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations during a pandemic.
- Prepare your workforce by selecting key position lines of succession and developing critical function task sheets.
- Establish an emergency communications plan and revise periodically. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications including suppliers and customers, and processes for communicating business and employee status.

## 2. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your employees and customers:

- Find up-to-date, reliable pandemic information from community public health agencies such as [pandemicflu.gov](http://pandemicflu.gov) or [collier.floridahealth.gov](http://collier.floridahealth.gov).
- Encourage and track annual influenza vaccination for employees.
- Evaluate employee access to healthcare services (including mental health) during a pandemic and improve services as needed.
- Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. hand-shaking, seating in meetings, office layout, shared workstations) among employees and between employees and customers.
- Identify employees and key customers with special needs, and incorporate the requirements of such persons into your preparedness plan.
- Provide information via newsletters, e-mails, posters, phone messages, websites etc. This information is readily available at [collier.floridahealth.gov](http://collier.floridahealth.gov).

## 3. Establish policies to be implemented during a pandemic:

- Establish policies for employee compensation and sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g. non-punitive, liberal leave), including policies on when a previously ill person is no longer infectious and can return to work after illness.
- Establish policies for flexible worksite (e.g. telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts).
- Establish policies for preventing influenza spread at the worksite. Promote respiratory hygiene / cough etiquette, and prompt exclusion of people with influenza symptoms.
- Establish policies for employees who have been exposed to pandemic influenza, are suspected to be ill, or become ill at the worksite. Infection control response is critical, and immediate mandatory sick leave is warranted.
- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's response plan, altering business operations (e.g. shutting down operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees.

## 4. Allocate resources to protect your employees and customers during a pandemic:

- Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal) in all business locations.
- Enhance communications and information technology infrastructures as needed to support employee telecommuting and remote customer access.
- Consult with your insurance or health care provider to ensure availability of medical consultation and advice for emergency response.

## 5. Communicate to and educate your employees:

- Develop and disseminate programs and materials covering pandemic fundamentals (e.g. signs and symptoms of influenza, modes of transmission), personal and family protection and response strategies (e.g. hand hygiene, coughing/sneezing etiquette).
- Ensure communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Provide information for the at-home care of ill employees and family members.

## **Free**

Develop a Continuity Of Operations Plan (COOP) by identifying essential functions, key positions, and determining lines of succession for those positions. Assistance with COOP planning is provided by the Collier County Health department free of charge. Call 252-2631.

Find up-to-date, reliable pandemic information from community public health agencies such as [pandemicflu.gov](http://pandemicflu.gov) or [collier.floridahealth.gov](http://collier.floridahealth.gov).

“Just in Time” training is available for your employees at [collier.floridahealth.gov](http://collier.floridahealth.gov). Topics include “Influenza 101, Influenza home care, and Respiratory etiquette”.

Create an emergency contact list including employee emergency contact information. Identify those employees or customers with special needs.

Create a list of critical business contractors and vendors whom you will use in an emergency.

Develop critical function task sheets for the identified key positions and provide opportunities for cross training to increase employee confidence.

Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. hand-shaking, seating in meetings, office layout, shared workstations) among employees and between employees and customers.

Establish policies for preventing influenza spread at the worksite. Promote respiratory hygiene / cough and sneeze etiquette.

Establish policies for flexible worksite and flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts).

Establish policies for employee compensation and sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic.

Include emergency preparedness planning information during work. Disseminate information to employees in newsletters, e mails, or other internal communications tools.

Encourage and track annual influenza vaccination for employees.

Promote family and individual preparedness among your employees.

Talk to your staff about your organization’s disaster plans and practice the plans.

## **Minimal \$\$**

Two-way communication is central, before, during and after a disaster. Develop platforms for communicating pandemic status and actions to employees, vendors, suppliers, and customers. Set up a telephone call tree, password-protected page on the business Web site, e-mail or call-in voice recording to communicate with employees and customers in an emergency.

Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal) in all business locations.

Provide First Aid and CPR training to key staff.