



H1N1 Flu: Recommendations for Business (September 2009)

Businesses across Kansas play an important role in helping limit the spread of H1N1. Recommended actions for businesses will depend upon the severity of disease in coming months. The **Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)** is watching the situation closely, and will advise if changes are needed. For now, under current flu conditions, these are the recommendations for businesses from KDHE and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- **Sick employees should stay home.** People with symptoms of flu-like illness should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever.
- **Sick employees at work should be advised to go home.** Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival, or who become sick during the work day, should be promptly separated from others and sent home. Do not require a doctor's statement from sick employees, as doctors' offices and emergency rooms may be overwhelmed. Cases of mild disease do **not** need to see a doctor, but still should self-isolate. We will all need to help reduce the load on our healthcare system so people who truly need care can access services.
- **Encourage your employees to wash their hands often.** Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Encourage your employees to cover their coughs and sneezes.** Communicate the importance of covering coughs and sneezes, and provide tissues and no-touch wastebaskets.
- **Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.** Clean surfaces that are frequently touched with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- **Encourage employees to get vaccinated.** Encourage employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu, and suggest that employees at higher risk for flu complications get vaccinated for 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available to them.

- **Protect employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu.** Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, such as pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, should check with their health care provider promptly if they become sick. Encourage these employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu as recommended when vaccines are available. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.
- **Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.** Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so that business operations can continue.
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps.** Advise workers to check for signs of flu-like illness before traveling, to notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick. Tell employees who are traveling how to seek health care if they become sick enough on the road to require care. If employees become sick during travel, they should stay in their hotel room until their fever has resolved for at least 24 hours, unless they are seeking medical care.
- **Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or temporary closure of child care programs.** Allow workers to stay home to take care of their children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed. Encourage your employees with children to plan for child care alternatives if possible. Employees may need to take care of sick family members also.

As with any influenza virus, individuals are encouraged to take the following steps to reduce spread:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick to avoid spreading illness to co-workers and friends.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.

Kansans with questions about the virus can email H1N1fluinfo@kdheks.gov. Information is also available from KDHE at www.kdheks.gov.



As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans. Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.

Revised 9/14/09