

# Pandemic Influenza Plan Overview



May 2009

The purpose of this document is to provide a basic outline to guide general employers through pandemic influenza planning. A pandemic influenza (pan-flu) plan can be a part of an emergency plan, a contingency plan, or any existing plan within an organization. This guide for a pan-flu plan allows procedures to intensify if the pandemic becomes more serious. More comprehensive guides are available, including ones specific to healthcare. Web addresses are found at the end of this document.

Pandemic influenza can be caused by a number of different viruses; the term pandemic refers to how far reaching the influenza has spread, not its lethality. A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness, and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide.

## A plan works best with the following elements:

- Develop a plan
- Determine critical tasks
- Cross train
- Personal protective equipment and hygiene issues
- Employee training
- Leave time
- Telework and alternate work hours
- Social distancing and travel restrictions

## Actions prior to a pandemic

**Plan:** Developing and communicating a plan is critical for a business to prepare for pan-flu. A plan outlines steps the employer takes to protect employees, determines necessary work needs, and addresses leave issues associated with time off for illness and illness prevention. Companies that provide critical infrastructure services, such as power and telecommunications, have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation in a crisis and should plan accordingly. A plan works best if it is specific for the location, work process, and staff. The [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA) Web sites contain guidance for employers developing pan-flu plans.

**Critical tasks:** An important first step in pan-flu planning is determining critical tasks. Which employees or classifications are performing work that is time critical or necessary for the

business? Can some work be delayed until after the emergency is over? For those tasks that are critical, can they be accomplished through telework or distance work? If they are critical tasks, and must be accomplished in the workplace, what precautions can be put in place to protect those critical employees?

**Cross training:** Emergency planning should include contingency planning. It is important to cross-train employees on tasks that must be accomplished. After employers determine critical tasks, they should cross-train additional employees, in case employees assigned to that work are unable to get to work.

## Early and preventative actions

**Personal protective equipment and hygiene issues:** The written plan should include a section on available personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene issues. An N95 dust mask can be effective against airborne particles (including microbial agents). Fit testing of an N95 dust mask can be accomplished through methods described in [Appendix A of 1910.134](#) Respiratory Protection. N95 respirators or dust masks are NIOSH approved for occupational use. Although some surgical masks may have N95 NIOSH approval, employers should evaluate their appropriateness for occupational use.

When an employee voluntarily chooses to use an N95 respirator (whether supplied by themselves or their employer) the employer only needs to make a copy of [Appendix D](#) of Oregon OSHA's [Respiratory Protection](#) standard available. In these situations, employees are wearing the respirator in the same manner and for the same reasons as the general public.

Hand washing is critical in reducing the spread of disease. Employers should make hand sanitizers available and encourage employees to wash their hands frequently. The Cover Your Cough poster and flyer should be displayed in several locations at the worksite. The poster can be downloaded from the [CDC](#) Web site at and is available in many languages.



## Pandemic Influenza Plan Overview — continued

**Training:** Employers need to train employees on the pan-flu plan for their safety and health during a pan-flu event. The training should include:

- The plan and how to access the plan.
- The availability, requirements, and limitations of PPE and the importance of hygiene issues such as washing your hands, covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing, and using hand sanitizers.
- The mode of transmittance of the virus or bacteria causing the illness.
- The effectiveness of social distancing, remaining six feet from people.
- Any travel restrictions the employer has imposed.
- The importance of staying home if you feel sick.
- The availability of telework and leave time.

### Other significant actions

**Leave time:** The best practice is for employees who are feeling sick to stay at home. Even so, many employees will continue to come to work if they don't have adequate leave time to cover their illness. Employers are encouraged to determine if additional leave time can be awarded to keep sick employees at home. The written plan should clearly outline the employer's leave policy, available leave time, and recording instructions.

**Telework and alternate work hours:** *Telework* is as a good way to avoid employees spreading disease within the workplace. Many types of work can be accomplished via computer and telephone. Employers are encouraged to determine if employees can work from home.

*Alternate work schedules* can reduce disease spread by reducing the amount of time that employees spend in close proximity to one another. Can the work be accomplished with staff working evenings or weekends? When evaluating critical tasks, determine which tasks can be completed in a nontraditional environment.

**Social distancing and travel restrictions:** Employers should restrict travel when possible, especially to locations with government issued travel warnings. Employers should carefully evaluate which travel is absolutely necessary and delay all unnecessary travel.

*Distancing* is also effective in reducing the spread of airborne disease because these diseases transmit more easily for people in close contact. The World Health Organization recommends six feet between people. Employers should determine if physical distancing is feasible for their type of work.

### Resources:

Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic  
[www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza\\_pandemic.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html)

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab4.html/](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab4.html/)

Centers for Disease Control  
[www.cdc.gov/swineflu/](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/)

World Health Organization  
[www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html)  
[www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/phase/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html)

*For more information, call the Oregon OSHA office nearest you.*

#### Salem Central Office

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Salem, OR 97301-3882

**Phone:** 503-378-3272

**Toll-free:** 800-922-2689

**Fax:** 503-947-7461

**en Español:** 800-843-8086

**Web site:** [www.orosha.org](http://www.orosha.org)

#### Portland

1750 NW Naito Parkway, Ste. 112  
Portland, OR 97209-2533  
503-229-5910

*Consultation:* 503-229-6193

#### Salem

1340 Tandem Ave. NE, Ste. 160  
Salem, OR 97303  
503-378-3274

*Consultation:* 503-373-7819

#### Eugene

1140 Willagillespie, Ste. 42  
Eugene, OR 97401-2101  
541-686-7562

*Consultation:* 541-686-7913

#### Bend

Red Oaks Square  
1230 NE Third St., Ste. A-115  
Bend, OR 97701-4374

541-388-6066

*Consultation:* 541-388-6068

#### Medford

1840 Barnett Road, Ste. D  
Medford, OR 97504-8250  
541-776-6030

*Consultation:* 541-776-6016

#### Pendleton

721 SE Third St., Ste. 306  
Pendleton, OR 97801-3056  
541-276-9175

*Consultation:* 541-276-2353

