

DATE: April 28, 2009
TO: State Employees
FROM: Tom Hanson, Commissioner
RE: Swine Flu information and preparedness

Dear State Employee:

Many of you are aware that human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States and internationally. **At the present time, there have been NO swine influenza cases confirmed in Minnesota.**

This situation is highly fluid as details from many locations are emerging. This new swine influenza virus is made up of components of pig, bird and human influenza viruses that are combined in a way that has not been seen before. The fact that it seems to have sustained human-to-human spread is concerning. This is a situation that we are all watching very closely. At the end of this memo, you will find a list of websites and resources for more information about what is discussed.

Over the past few years, state agencies, like many other public and private employers throughout Minnesota and the country, have been planning for the possibility of a flu pandemic. While a pandemic does **not** currently exist, with the new situations surrounding Swine Influenza Infection, it is prudent to be calm yet vigilant. Many of the services we deliver are directly related to the well being of Minnesota citizens and must continue during any emergency situation including a possible pandemic. To fulfill these obligations, it is critical that state employees are individually prepared and able to report to work.

With this expectation in mind we would like to provide information to you on steps you can do now to prepare yourself and family for any emergency.

1. Personal/Family Readiness Plans

Disasters can strike at any time. In the context of an infectious disease outbreak, such as the Human Swine Influenza, it's important to plan in advance. Employees should have back-up plans for child and elder adult care, as well as alternative pet care arrangement. Preparation is the key to success in handling emergencies. A list of resources for personal and family readiness planning is available at the end of this memo.

2. Good Health Hygiene

Employees should always practice good health hygiene. First and foremost, wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health and if you are ill, stay home. Cover your cough and avoid people who are ill.

3. Education

It will take an adequately informed and prepared workforce to ensure that we are able to deliver critical services to the citizens of Minnesota during a sustained event, such as a pandemic. As part of the ongoing statewide pandemic planning effort, we have created a state employee pandemic educational awareness program titled “Pandemic – Ready. Set. Respond.”

This educational program is less than 30 minutes in length and provides state employees basic information about pandemics and personal preparedness. Because this educational program covers employment expectations during a pandemic, it should be viewed by all employees including those employees that have already been provided with some level of pandemic awareness education. Access to the training can be found at <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/preparedness>.

4. Communication

A lot of information is floating around. Not all of it is accurate. It’s important that you are provided with accurate and timely information. MMB is dedicated to provide all employees with information about this situation. We have established an emergency website that will provide employees with updated information about the Human Swine Flu, guidance and recommendations to employees on steps they can take to prepare and respond to this situation, and an area of Frequently Asked Questions. As always, employees can contact their direct supervisor with questions or concerns.

I am confident that Minnesota state government will continue to provide its services to the citizens of Minnesota. Thank you for all your continued hard work and spirit of cooperation.

Attachment: List of Resources

List of Resources

Individual and Family Readiness:

www.codeready.org

www.ready.gov

Swine Flu Information:

Centers for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

Minnesota Department of Health:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/swine/index.html>

Pandemic Influenza Education:

Pandemic-Ready, Set, Respond: <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/preparedness>