



Pandemic Influenza

Get Informed...Be Prepared

A newsletter for Minnesota organizations preparing for a possible influenza pandemic.

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Pandemic Flu Planning Team

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Guests, good cooking,
and clean drinking
water at this party

In this issue of *Pandemic Influenza*, we're giving free legal advice, eating "cowboy caviar" at home, and making sure clean drinking water is on our pan flu menu. Here are some highlights:

- In the "Be Our Guest" section, Greg Stenmoe from Briggs and Morgan provides his perspective on how businesses can get a head start on legal aspects of pandemic flu planning (page 2).
- The Burnsville Citizen Corp Council whipped up *Recipes for a Disaster*, a cookbook that dishes emergency preparedness information along with family-friendly recipes for those sheltering in place (page 2).
- Sometimes we like to go in-depth, so in this issue we introduce the first of a series of special reports. Find out more about environmental health aspects of pandemic flu planning from David Jones of the Environmental Health Division (page 5).

Feds extend deadlines for state community disease containment, antiviral distribution plans to Feb. 1

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have extended the deadline for submitting state plans for community disease containment and antiviral distribution from November 30, 2006, to February 1, 2007.

According to Michelle Watters, Regional Emergency Coordinator for DHHS Region V, state preparedness directors in the region voiced concern about the timeframe for the two planning areas, both of which have complex ethics and logistics issues.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has established a workgroup for developing the community disease containment plan. MDH also plans to hire a contractor to facilitate a workgroup on ethical considerations inherent in making choices about pandemic flu, such as who receives vaccines or antiviral medications when supplies are limited.

MCHCE makes recommendations on vaccine distribution during a pandemic flu

A pandemic influenza outbreak is underway, and an effective vaccine arrives in Minnesota – in limited quantities. Who gets the early doses? The Minnesota Center for Health Care Ethics (MCHCE), a forum on health policy issues sponsored by Fairview Health System, HealthEast Care Systems, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, weighed in with a September 2006 report. Highest priority goes to those with various combinations of these characteristics: high flu mortality risk, strong immune response to vaccination, duty to perform health or safety roles, high risk of transmitting the virus to vulnerable groups, or lack of other forms of protection (such as antiviral medication). Read the full report at www.stolaf.edu/mnethx/PanFluReport.pdf.

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Be our guest... Greg Stenmoe, Briggs and Morgan

Pandemic flu – legally speaking

We cannot predict if or when pandemic influenza will strike, but it is wiser to plan carefully than be left unprepared in the wake of a catastrophe. The magnitude of impact remains uncertain, but from a legal perspective, there are certain actions you can take now to minimize legal exposure.

Examine insurance policies and contracts. Become familiar with all terms and exclusions. Does your business policy provide coverage for liability arising from infectious diseases, business interruption and government-imposed quarantines? Will your medical coverage be adequate for employees? What about short- and long-term disability coverage?

Review and modify all human resources policies; identify critical personnel and functions. In a pandemic situation, expect a dramatic increase in employee absences, discrimination claims, HIPAA and privacy complaints, workplace safety issues, and even allegations of defamation.

Tailor company policies to address a pandemic catastrophe. Identify critical personnel and functions, and cross-train the workforce accordingly. Businesses must also have contingency plans in place to address transportation, building access and technology issues. Vendor and supply contracts, as well as employment agreements, also need to be reviewed carefully.

Connect with local government. In a declared emergency, the government is an active force. Contact county officials to find out what plans are in place and how business may be affected. With some simple planning now, you can avoid future problems and minimize legal exposure.

HSEM *Local Jurisdiction Service Continuation Planning Guide* is online. If you haven't seen the updated HSEM *Local Jurisdiction Service Continuation Planning Guide*, you're missing a great resource for pandemic flu planning. The September 14, 2006, publication is a comprehensive guide to help local government get ready for a possible pandemic. Download it at http://www.hsem.state.mn.us/uploadedfile/Pandemic_Service_Continuation_Guide_H.pdf.

Burnsville emergency preparedness group dishes up *Recipes for a Disaster*

"If you can hold your family down for 72 hours, keep them eating and drinking fluids, it gives the city a chance to mobilize all these helpful people to get to your area," says Steve Moore, one of the Burnsville Citizen Corps Council members who authored a cookbook for emergency situations involving sheltering at home.

Recipes for a Disaster serves up tips for citizens on how to hunker down at home during an emergency—and eat well, even without electricity. The paperback has been distributed through National Night Out and other community events. It contains recipes relying on canned or packaged ingredients, some of which are "water-lean" in case clean water is in limited supply. With 22 recipes with such intriguing names as cowboy caviar, no-name Mexican soup and peanut-butter French toast, the cookbook promotes good nutrition in times of stress. It also is a creative way to remind citizens to anticipate and prepare for disasters.

"Particularly if you have a family, the smaller the kids, the more important it is to give them a sense of stability, and food is a great way of doing it," says Moore.

To find out more or obtain a copy, contact Amber Nordland at the Burnsville Emergency Management Department, (952) 895-4575 or amber.nordland@ci.burnsville.mn.us.

Information for this article was taken from a Burnsville This Week report, October 21, 2006, written by John Gessner.

Tamiflu and children: new FDA labeling

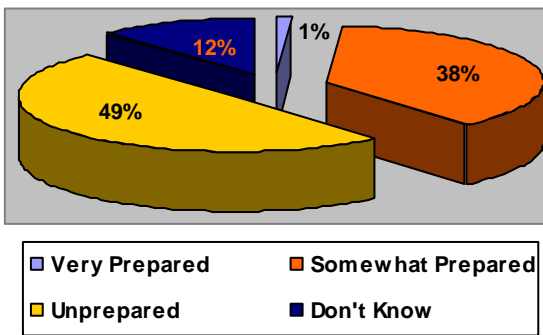
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has updated the labeling on Tamiflu to reflect added precautions regarding side effects in children. The FDA reported 103 new cases of delirium, hallucinations and unusual psychiatric behavior in children, which may be associated with the drug. It also is possible that severe cases of the flu could be responsible for the abnormal behavior observed, but the FDA can't rule out the drug as the cause. Patients who take Tamiflu should be closely monitored for signs of abnormal behavior, according to the FDA.

Public Information Campaign

Informal survey provides a local public health and emergency management perspective on readiness among Minnesota citizens

The MDH and the Department of Public Safety Homeland Safety and Emergency Management Division (HSEM) sent informal surveys to local public health and emergency management officials to ask them their opinions about readiness among the general public in their jurisdictions. The survey was part of the needs assessment process for the joint MDH-HSEM public information campaign.

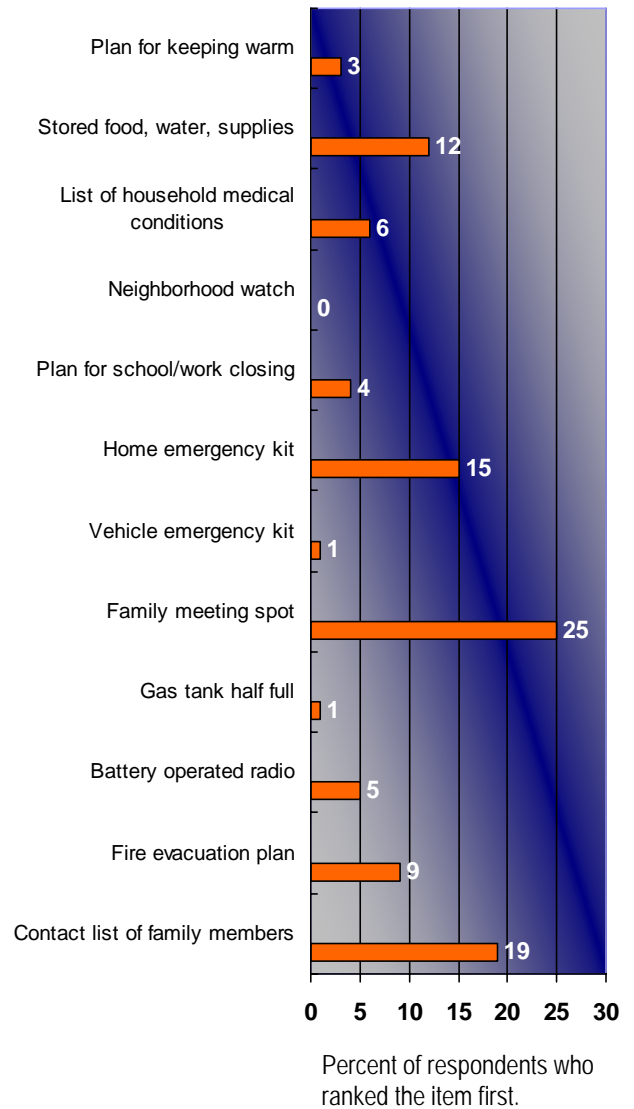
Question 1: In your opinion, how prepared are people (the general public) in your jurisdiction to cope with a serious emergency (such as a flood, pandemic flu, or terrorist incident)? Of the 115 respondents, 49 percent responded that people were unprepared, 38 percent somewhat prepared.



Officials were asked to rank which three emergency preparedness actions they would most want citizens to take in their jurisdictions (see graph at right). The ones ranked highest tend to follow the “make a plan,” “get a kit,” and “be informed” messages of the www.ready.gov campaign.

While the survey was not scientific, it does tap the expertise of front-line planners for pandemic flu and other emergencies, who recommended that the joint MDH-HSEM Emergency Preparedness Public Information Campaign “needs a central theme that is both catchy and motivational,” “brief and concise messages,” real-life stories of disaster victims, and frequent repetition or reminders. A summary of the entire survey will be online in December.

Question 4: If you could persuade people in your jurisdiction to take only three actions on the following list, which would be the most important?



Campaign Steering Team will make ‘firm’ decision on contractor by end of November
 The Public Information Campaign Steering Team, which consists of MDH and DPS/HSEM staff and representatives of local public health and local emergency management, reviewed six proposals from marketing and public relations firms interested in developing the campaign. A decision will be made by November 30. A broad-based group of stakeholders on the Public Information Campaign Advisory Group will be advising the MDH and HSEM on how to reach diverse audiences and make sure the campaign meshes with existing resources. We’ll provide a list of advisory group and steering team members in the next issue.

Education and Training

Satellite learning gives you access to [national figures in pandemic flu planning](#). The MDH is a partner in the Public Health Training Network, which offers satellite learning conferences that may be just the solution for busy professionals unable to attend all-day conferences. The conferences are offered at the MDH Distance Communication and Learning Center, and can be down linked at MDH district offices or other distant sites. In addition, online courses allow for updating your skills from the comfort of a home or work computer. Upcoming conferences and online courses include:

- Planning and Execution of Disaster Response, November 28, 2006, noon – 1:30 p.m. by the South Central Center for Public Health Preparedness.
- Managing Contemporary Mass Fatalities, December 14, 2006, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m., University at Albany School of Public Health.
- Emergency Risk Communication for Public Health Professionals (online) from the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, go to www.nwcp.org/edu/training/courses-exercises/courses/risk-communication.
- Preparedness and Community Response to Pandemics (online, free) from the Center for Public Health Preparedness, go to www.ualbanycp.org/learning/registration/detail_Pandemics.cfm.

Find out what other conferences are coming up at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hrm/dl/events.html. To attend or download a conference at MDH locations, contact Judith Woitas at (651) 201-5790. To download in other locations, contact a local organization (universities, for example) with a steerable satellite dish.

U of M Center for Public Health Preparedness has [training modules on mass dispensing](#) “Mass Dispensing Sites: A Primer for Volunteers” consists of three online training modules, including pre- and post-tests and a certificate upon completion. Find out more about this course at www.sph.umn.edu/umncph/massdisp/home.html.

Regional and Local Consultation

‘Good ideas’ from local partners rolling in
We asked for regional and local partners’ success stories, and this month we’re covering the Burnsville Citizen Corps Council tasty emergency planning guide cleverly disguised as a cookbook on page 2. Send your good ideas to katherine.carlson@health.state.mn.us by the 6th of each month and look for a pandemic planning in schools initiative and the “Are You Ready” Workgroup in Sherburne County in our December issue.

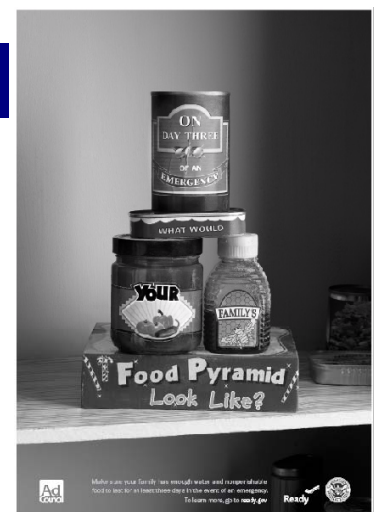
Pandemic Flu Digest

Publications of Interest

- “OSHA Guidance Update on Protecting Employees from Avian Flu Viruses” is available at http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_AvianFlu/avian_flu_guidance_english.pdf. The guidance, as well as other important resource information on the topic, is available in English and Spanish by visiting the In Focus section on the home page of OSHA’s Web site at <http://www.osha.gov/index.html>.
- “In flu pandemic, staying home raises paycheck, care questions,” by Lauran Neergaard, Associated Press, Oct. 25, 2006, at <http://www.cnn.com/2006/HEALTH/10/25/flu.pandemic.ap/>. A survey released last week showed that when it comes to infection control during epidemics, social distancing plans still have a long way to go to address real-world concerns. See survey results at: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/press/releases/press10262006.html>

The Last Word...

Don’t miss the emergency preparedness ads now available free from the Ad Council at <http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=50>. U.S. Department of Homeland Security sponsored the ads.



Special Report: Environmental health aspects of pandemic flu planning

Occasionally, the Pandemic Influenza e-bulletin will provide a more detailed report about a specific aspect of pandemic flu planning and preparation. This is the first of these special reports, written by David Jones, MDH Environmental Health Policy, Planning and Analysis Division, (651) 201-4565.

Much of the pandemic influenza planning guidance does not address environmental public health hazards or response functions. There is increasing recognition, however, that a severe pandemic may cause far-reaching and sustained effects that stress local, state, and federal government resources, interrupt municipal services and private business, and disrupt social order.

If illness becomes widespread, workforce shortages may disrupt infrastructure and community services (e.g., safe water for consumption and hygiene, sewage treatment, safe food storage or preparation, waste management, electrical power generation) necessary to protect public health from environmental hazards. Such secondary hazards and morbidity are likely to be particularly acute in densely populated urban areas and among the least resilient individuals or groups in a community. Examples of potential environmental hazards or conditions include:

- **Mass Care Sites**
 - Increased need to ensure personal hygiene, food and water safety, sanitation, waste management, facility maintenance and engineering
- **Home Quarantine**
 - Safe provision of basic needs (food, sanitation, etc.)
- **Simultaneous Occurrence of Other Hazard Events**
- **Disruption of Services and Supplies**
 - Water treatment and distribution systems
 - Food supply and safety assurance
 - Solid, sanitary and hazardous waste management
 - Regulated parties (food, beverage and lodging, water treatment, etc.)
 - Supply chain interruption; electrical power generation; fuel delivery for heating and transportation systems, restaurant supplies, water treatment supplies, etc.

Environmental public health issues related to pandemic influenza are not necessarily tied to pandemic phases or other specific metrics. Rather, they are likely to be triggered by combinations of factors affecting business continuity, workforce, personal behaviors, and increased demands. Also, potential vulnerabilities resulting from disease control and containment measures should not be overlooked, however challenging they are to imagine.

The MDH Environmental Health Division has identified several environmental health concerns that local public health professionals may need to include in their pandemic influenza planning. Selected environmental public health responsibilities are illustrated in the chart below, along with examples of specific actions that may be applied in response. The chart is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all conceivable issues in a worst-case pandemic scenario.

Until now, this list has received limited review, within MDH and by environmental health professionals at the Twin Cities Advanced Practice Center funded by the National Association of City and County Health Officials. In the interest of obtaining a broader perspective on this issue, we are asking readers for feedback regarding the responsibilities and any suggestions for improving the list or the examples. Please submit questions, comments or suggestions to David Jones at david.bw.jones@health.state.mn.us.

Role	Examples
Monitor potential food- or water-borne outbreaks and implement preventive/corrective measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent possible, collaborate with appropriate public health partners to investigate illness (infectious and non-infectious) potentially resulting from loss of environmental-health-related barriers and controls.
Provide technical assistance/support to assure safety of food supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain procedures for advising on safe food preparation and handling in various settings (mass feeding operations, isolation and quarantine settings, emergency response operations, food service establishments or private homes affected by disrupted infrastructure). • Work with volunteer organizations to assure safe food handling and preparation. • Monitor for ad hoc food operations and inspect donated foods. Oversee disposal of potentially hazardous food items. • Conduct inspections at mass feeding/sheltering/care operations or other mass gathering sites to assure food safety. • Provide technical assistance or other support to food service establishments as needed. • Close or post food service establishments if they are unable to operate in a safe manner. • If people are advised to remain in their homes as part of community disease containment strategies, educate the public regarding potential food safety concerns and preventive actions. • If services of water treatment and distribution systems or electrical power generation are disrupted, educate the public regarding food safety concerns and preventive actions.
Provide technical assistance/support to assure safety of water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and assistance in the security of public water supply systems and the maintenance of potable water supplies. • Ensure that staff, functions and supplies critical to maintaining potable water systems have been identified, plan for back-up sources of materials, cross train staff, write job action sheets and instructions, or develop memoranda of understanding. • Conduct inspections at mass feeding/sheltering/care operations or other mass gathering sites to assure water safety. • Provide technical assistance or other support to water supply systems as needed. • If services of water treatment and distribution systems are disrupted, educate the public regarding water safety and related health concerns and alternatives.
Provide technical assistance/support to assure sanitary conditions are maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct inspections at mass feeding/sheltering/care/gathering operations to assure availability of sufficient amenities for sanitary collection and isolation of human excreta. • Assure availability of supplies for handwashing following contact with human body waste. • If water distribution or wastewater collection systems are disrupted, educate the public regarding sanitation and personal hygiene alternatives.
Provide technical assistance/support to assure wastes (solid and hazardous) are collected and disposed of properly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct inspections at mass feeding/sheltering/care/gathering operations to assure proper management of wastes. • If normal waste management services are disrupted, educate the public and regulated parties regarding waste management alternatives.
Provide technical assistance and support to ensure protection from health hazards related to built environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct inspections at mass feeding/sheltering/care/gathering operations to assure safety of the indoor environment for occupants. • If water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection, electricity generation, waste management or other building operations are disrupted, educate decision makers, building managers/operators, and occupants about potential indoor environment safety and health concerns. • If people are advised to remain in their homes as part of community disease containment, educate the public regarding potential indoor environmental hazards and preventive actions.
Assist regulated parties in their efforts to continue operations and recover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage regulated parties and establishments to assess challenges posed by pandemic influenza and plan for their continuity of operations. • Monitor status of regulatory programs and regulated parties' operations. • Maintain normal services to regulated parties. • Provide technical assistance or other support to regulated parties as needed. • Waive, modify or suspend selected regulatory requirements which the LPH department enforces, when such waivers are provided for.