It’s Not Flu As Usual
WHAT BUSINESSES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PANDEMIC FLU PLANNING
Imagine that ten percent of your employees are too sick to come to work on any given day. Imagine that cumulatively, a quarter of your workforce could be out for as many as three to four months. Imagine that the other businesses you rely on are facing the same massive absentee rates.

Hard as it may be to believe, such a scenario could happen — indeed, some health officials say it’s inevitable. The cause: a pandemic flu.

What A Pandemic Flu Could Mean To Your Business

Each winter, the flu kills approximately 36,000-40,000 Americans, hospitalizes more than 200,000, and costs the U.S. economy more than $10 billion in lost productivity and direct medical expenses.

But at that rate, health experts are warning about a far more lethal kind of flu — a pandemic flu that could kill more than a million in the U.S., hospitalize more than 2 million, and cost our economy anywhere from $70 billion to $160 billion.

A pandemic flu will strike more quickly and sicker than seasonal flu, affecting all age groups. It will cause three to four times more deaths than seasonal flu. Health officials are concerned about the next “bird flu” strain spreading to a flu that could cause far more serious health problems. There’s no natural immunity against it — the World Health Organization has said that a bird flu pandemic could infect 25-30 percent of the world’s population.

With that much of the population and workforce affected, a pandemic flu could damage your business — perhaps even force it to close down for a time.

This brochure offers guidance on how businesses can:
- Prepare for a pandemic flu in order to maintain business continuity
- Help protect employees’ health
- Work with health officials to minimize disruption
Protecting Employees’ Health

Flu is caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs, and is generally spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. An effective vaccine, when available, will be the best safeguard against pandemic flu. In addition, the following simple, commonsense precautions can prevent those around you from getting sick.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you feel sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you're sick or have flu symptoms. Get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent others from getting sick. Otherwise flu viruses can spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you against germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand wipers or gel sanitizers.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods, and avoid smoking, which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

Key Differences Between Annual Flu And Pandemic Flu

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<tr>
<th>ANNUAL FLU</th>
<th>PANDEMIC FLU</th>
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<tr>
<td>Occurs every year during the winter months.</td>
<td>Occurs three to four times a century or every 10 years.</td>
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<td>Affects 5-10 percent of the U.S. population.</td>
<td>Affects 20-50 percent of the population.</td>
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|## What To Do In The Event Of An Outbreak

If a pandemic flu strikes, government health officials willissue information and warnings and may need to disseminate advice on how to avoid becoming ill. Your company’s managers, human resources department, and employees should pay close attention to the guidance provided by local and state health departments and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) . Other organizations that provide guidance in public health emergencies include the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org), and the World Health Organization (www.who.org).

In a worst-case scenario, “business as usual” may cease. Government health officials may have to implement dramatic measures, including shutting down certain businesses that involve high levels of interaction with the public, such as theaters and restaurants. Health officials may also have to restrict travel, cancel public events such as concerts or sports, and close schools.

Plan Now To Keep Your Business In Business

- Business continuity means ensuring that essential business functions can quickly resume following a disruption of normal business operations.
- In recent times, business continuity has also meant planning for bioterrorism and other catastrophic events.