



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner

Department of Health
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September 11, 2009

Dear Business Leader:

As you may be aware, the novel H1N1 influenza virus is still present throughout Virginia. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has been tracking influenza throughout the summer and is anticipating a resurgence of the novel H1N1 virus along with the return of seasonal influenza this fall.

The start of the school season brings with it the opportunity for increased influenza activity. The U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) have developed updated guidance for businesses concerning the novel H1N1 influenza outbreak. This guidance, along with other information concerning novel H1N1 influenza for businesses and employers, can be found on the VDH website:

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/news/Alerts/SwineFlu/BusinessResources.htm> . CDC recommends that individuals infected with novel H1N1 should stay out of work (and/or school) until they have been without fever and have not been using fever-controlling medications for a minimum of 24 hours.

VDH encourages you to share with your employees and customers the following simple, everyday steps that they can take to protect themselves and their families and friends.

- Review emergency plans at home and at work.
- Get your seasonal flu vaccination now and plan to get your novel H1N1 vaccination when the vaccine is released later this fall.
- If sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting others.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

We also suggest you revisit your Continuity of Operations Plans. To that end, here are some key points for consideration:

- Discuss expectations with staff early.
- Encourage staff to get vaccinated against both seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza.
- Communications will be key. Identify communications channels and messages.
- Verify work-at-home capabilities.
- Be prepared if schools dismiss students or if child care programs close as this may result in increased employee absenteeism.
- Prepare for possible labor shortage
- Keep sick workers home.
- Consider screening employees prior to coming into the building and suggest those who are ill return home.
- Identify your cross function support.
- Plan on how you will handle employees calling into work with questions.

VDH will continue to monitor this situation and will keep the business community informed. If you have additional questions, please contact either the toll-free VDH Public Inquiry Center at 1-877-ASK-VDH3 (1-877-275-8343) or your local health department. Thank you for your continued strong support and assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karen Remley".

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner