

Pandemic Preparedness

Major Points to Consider

Notes from 7/23/08 Workshop sponsored by PA
Department of Health

Major Points to Consider:

Based on history and science, the occurrence of another influenza pandemic is not a matter of “*if*” but “*when*”.

- Influenza Pandemics have been recorded since 400 B.C. and have occurred three times in the 20th century. In the past 300 years, the range between pandemics has been 10 to 49 years. The last Pandemic: 1968-1969, “Hong Kong Flu”, with 1 million deaths.

Major Points to Consider

“Pandemic Fatigue Zone”: Avian Flu Pandemic is a Real Risk even though we aren’t hearing about it.

- Currently H5N1 Bird Flu has demonstrated an ability to mutate constantly (multiple subtypes of virus currently exist). Virus is adapting and currently spreading across Asia, Europe and Africa with an ability to infect humans and cause serious illness.

Major Points to Consider

- In 2008, 11 countries have reported H5N1 cases in domestic poultry/wildlife. Also, the variety of infected birds is increasing.
- There are significant public health problems in some of the affected countries: sick birds being concealed, societal practice of mouth to bird feeding, etc.
- H5N1 is mutating, spreading and doing things that the 1918 Spanish Flu virus did before becoming a pandemic.

Major Points to Consider

- Bird Flu in Humans: As of 6/19/08, of the 385 Human cases of H5N1, 243 died or a 63% mortality rate.
- 90% of those humans infected have been under 40 years and more than 50% have been under 20 years of age.
- Past performance does not guarantee future activity: H5N1 has not learned to spread easily person to person to date and may never do so. However another virus strain . . .

Businesses Need to be Prepared

- the entire pandemic may last up to 18 months – pandemic waves each last 6-8 weeks per community.
- will likely have 6 weeks (or less) of warning from time a pandemic is announced before it reaches the US.

Businesses Need to be Prepared

- Cumulative workforce absenteeism: 30 – 40% with public health measures increasing absenteeism: school closings/home quarantine/etc.
- Antivirals (Tamiflu/Relenza) will be in short supply initially; Vaccines will take 4-6 months to develop and distribute.

Businesses Need to be Prepared

- ✓ Mitigation Strategies: Policies and Procedures for workplace hygiene/environmental controls including issues of HVAC, Engineering Controls /Janitorial, Disinfecting, Use of PPE items & inventory, “Social Distancing” for infection control
- ✓ Employee Education Programs
- ✓ Employee Travel Policies
- ✓ Continuity of Operations Plans and Security Practices, Human Resources Strategies - Critical vs Non Critical Workers
- ✓ Consideration of Stockpiling Planning and Procurement Issues in Advance of a Pandemic - Antiviral and PPE Items, Antiviral Protection Programs (insurance)