

# PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA



- 🤔 Will your employees and customers be affected?
- 🤔 Will you be able to manage your business?
- 🤔 What can you do to prepare?



Loudoun County, Virginia  
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## Pandemic Influenza (Flu) Its Potential Impact in Virginia



Influenza, or flu, is a viral infection of the respiratory tract. Generally, seasonal influenza outbreaks occur each year in late fall and winter. Pandemic influenza is a widespread outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears in humans, causes serious illness, and spreads easily from person to person worldwide.

Four influenza pandemics occurred in the last century and all spread around the world within one year of being detected. Of these, the pandemic of 1918-1919 was the most severe, causing 50 million or more deaths worldwide. More than half a million Americans died in this pandemic. The last pandemic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred in 1968-1969. On June 11, 2009, H1N1 (swine) influenza was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and continued into 2010.

If a new and severe strain of avian influenza were to begin spreading across the globe, Virginia would not be spared from its impact. The severity of the next pandemic cannot be predicted, but modeling studies suggest that its effect in the United States could be severe. In Virginia, pandemic influenza impact estimates from a severe strain include:

- 2,700 to 6,300 deaths
- 12,000 to 28,500 hospitalizations
- 575,000 to 1.35 million outpatient visits
- 1.08 million to 2.52 million people becoming sick

Source: [www.vdh.virginia.gov/PandemicFlu/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/PandemicFlu/)

### Influenza Terms Defined

**Seasonal (or common) influenza** is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity, and an annual vaccine is available.

**Pandemic influenza** is caused by a novel virulent human influenza virus that causes a global outbreak of serious illness. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person.

Source: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)



## Could Your Business Be Affected?



- A pandemic may last as long as a year or more and cause high levels of sickness and death, including young healthy adults in the workforce. This contrasts with the snow emergencies that close business for a few days.
- Illness, fear, or school and day care closures could push employee absentee rates as high as 25 to 40 percent, forcing some businesses to temporarily or permanently close.
- Police, fire, and emergency medical services could be limited.
- Absenteeism could cause the closing of food and drug stores, gasoline stations, and banks.
- Delays in road clearing, phone, and utility repair are distinct possibilities.
- Global trade and travel, tourism, food and energy consumption, and, eventually, investment and financial markets may be affected.
- Your historical customer and supply base may become unpredictable, possibly with marked increases or decreases in demand for your products or services.
- Your employees may have many more questions about pay, benefits, health and life insurance, sick and annual leave, safety in the workplace, and teleworking capabilities.
- Neighboring jurisdictions in Virginia and the National Capital Region may also experience simultaneous outbreaks and may not be able to provide necessary medical and business resources and supplies.



## COOP Planning - Help Your Business Survive

Continuity of operations (COOP) planning is an effort to ensure continuity of essential business functions across a wide range of emergencies and events. COOP planning compels businesses to identify and focus on those functions that are truly critical to the continuation of operations throughout the emergency. All business owners and managers should develop and exercise basic continuity of operations plans before the next pandemic in order to improve their chances of surviving a pandemic or other emergency. Organizations providing critical infrastructure services (such as electric power, banking, transportation, and telecommunications) have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation in a crisis, as these services support the general economy and the general welfare of the population.

While floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes may damage or destroy business facilities, a pandemic may result in employee and customer loss. Effective COOP plans should envision the possibility of all of these threats.

COOP planning compels owners and managers to:

- Identify various threats that could impact business, and plan for them;
- Identify minimum essential functions that must continue throughout the emergency;
- Determine the vital information, employees, communications, and other resources required to support those essential functions; and
- Plan for the safety of all employees.

**Note:** COOP planning is *not* business *resumption* planning. COOP planning is aimed at ensuring that a business can *continue* its operations throughout an emergency.



## Who Should Be Involved in COOP Planning?

COOP planning is a team process that should involve:

- Senior management,
- A designated COOP Project Manager, and
- All business employees.

Senior management must be involved to ensure that COOP planning and exercises are performed and that the business is capable of carrying out each function related to COOP programs.



## Basic Elements of a COOP Plan

All COOP plans should address the following ten elements:

- 1. Essential functions**  
Functions that absolutely must continue throughout the emergency in order for the business to survive.
- 2. Orders of succession**  
Provisions for the assumption of senior leadership positions during an emergency when the incumbents are unable or unavailable to execute their duties.

- 3. Delegations of authority**  
Delegations of authority specify who is authorized to make decisions or act on behalf of the business manager, a department head, or other key individuals. They should be predetermined, documented in writing, and should state explicitly what authorities are delegated to whom.
- 4. Alternate facilities**  
Facilities, other than a business's primary facilities, where essential functions can be carried out safely in an emergency situation.
- 5. Interoperable communications**  
Communications that provide the capability to continue to perform essential functions, in conjunction with suppliers, customers, and employees, until normal operations can be resumed.
- 6. Vital records and databases**  
Those electronic and hardcopy documents, references, and records needed to support essential functions during an emergency situation.
- 7. Human capital**  
The sum of the talent, energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm that your employees invest in their work.
- 8. Tests, training, and exercises**  
Periodic tests, training, and exercises ensure that a business's COOP plans are capable of supporting the continued execution of its essential functions throughout an emergency.
- 9. Devolution of control**  
The capability to transfer legal authority and responsibility for essential functions from a business's primary operating staff and facilities to other employees at alternate facilities.
- 10. Reconstitution**  
The process by which a business's employees resume normal operations from the original or a replacement primary operating facility.

More information on COOP, including specifics on how to address each of these elements in your business COOP plan, may be found at:

- <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is546a.asp>
- <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is547a.asp>

## Business Preparedness for a Pandemic Specific Things You Can Do Now

In addition to developing COOP plans for your business in preparation for a pandemic, you should:



### **Communicate with employees.**

- Explain the pandemic threat and how your business plans to deal with it.
- Explain what changes may have to occur in the business for it to survive.
- Promote annual employee influenza vaccinations, good health practices, and hygiene.
- Promote individual and family pandemic preparedness planning.
- Encourage employees to keep emergency contact information current.
- Keep the tone of all communications balanced – do not scare or understate the threat.



### **Review, update, or modify human resources policies and procedures and information technology capabilities.**

- Employee accounting procedures.
- Time and attendance reporting policies and forms.
- Employee emergency contact and beneficiary designee information.
- Sick, annual, unpaid, and family medical leave policies and procedures.
- Sick at work and return to work policies.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contracts or agreements for employee counseling.
- 401K, pension, disability, and health insurance plan coverage.
- Travel and travel insurance policies.
- Policies covering employees working or traveling overseas.
- Employee critical skills inventory or database.

- Policies regarding compensation for accretion or change of duties.
- Policies on work shift assignments, flexible work hours, and additional shifts.
- Special needs employee policies.
- Telework policies.
- Information technology systems' capability to support more teleworkers.



**Review, update, or modify facility security, cleaning, and usage policies and procedures.**

- Office/Facility cleaning and HVAC maintenance contracts (more frequent or different cleaning may be required in a pandemic).
- Facility security and visitor control procedures (to protect employees from visitors, customers, and repair persons who might bring in the virus).
- Workplace social distancing, hygiene, and infection control policies.
- Policies regarding on-site conference calling versus meetings.



**Review customer and supplier agreements and relationships.**

- Delivery agreements, between you and your customers and suppliers.
- Additional inventory versus just-in-time delivery of supplies; warehousing needs.
- Contract contingency clauses for emergencies.
- Status of your suppliers' COOP and pandemic contingency plans.



**Determine alternate customer markets.**

- What other services or products can your business supply?
- How can you *re-purpose* existing services that you offer?
- Who are the customers for those alternate services/products?



## Review media and customer advertising strategies.



- Where will you get accurate news of a pandemic?
- Will your current marketing and advertising strategies still be appropriate?
- How will you communicate with the media, government, new customers, and suppliers about your capabilities and needs?

## Additional Pandemic Preparedness Information

More information for business, individual, and family emergency and pandemic influenza preparedness planning may be found on these web sites:

Loudoun County Health Department: [www.loudoun.gov/flu](http://www.loudoun.gov/flu)

Virginia Department of Health:  
[www.vdh.virginia.gov/pandemicflu](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/pandemicflu) and [www.vdh.virginia.gov/flu](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/flu)

Federal Government: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/>

READY.GOV: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## Loudoun County's Pandemic Influenza Response Plan

Loudoun County embarked on its pandemic influenza planning efforts in the spring of 2006. This ongoing coordinated effort involves county agencies, Loudoun County Public Schools, the Town of Leesburg, and other partner organizations, such as Inova Loudoun Hospital and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, as well as a variety of private sector groups. The County's planning initiatives were undertaken in concert with the emergency planning efforts of the Virginia Department of Health, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the World Health Organization. In addition, county officials are involved with the National Capital Region's efforts, led by the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

The Loudoun County Pandemic Influenza Response Plan, which was activated on April 27, 2009 in response to the 2009-2010 H1N1 (swine) flu pandemic, describes the coordinated local strategy to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic and supplements the Commonwealth of Virginia and federal pandemic flu response plans. The Plan is one of a variety of tools the County is using in its planning and response efforts. In addition to the Plan, individual County agency Continuity of Operations Plans address critical issues unique to each agency so they will be optimally prepared to respond should another pandemic occur.

The Loudoun County Pandemic Influenza Response Plan is available online at:  
[www.loudoun.gov/flu](http://www.loudoun.gov/flu)

**For further information on  
Pandemic Influenza,  
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