

## H1N1 (Swine Flu) Precautions

**Background:** The work activities performed by NJPHA employees, particularly maintenance personnel, may put them in environments where exposure to the H1N1 influenza virus may occur. The following are guidelines for preventing illness from this source.

The risk for infection can be reduced through a combination of actions. No single action provides complete protection, but a combined approach can help decrease the likelihood of transmission. The following steps are recommended:

- ✓ People who are sick with an influenza-like illness (ILI) (fever plus at least cough or sore throat and possibly other symptoms like runny nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea) should **stay home** and keep away from others as much as possible, for at least **24 hours after fever is gone**. (Fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.) While many employers struggle with attendance problems, this is one instance where encouraging employees not to “tough it out” is called for.
- ✓ Encourage employees to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or with hand sanitizer if there is no soap or water available. Also, encourage employees to avoid touching their noses, mouths, and eyes.
- ✓ Encourage employees to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or to cough and sneeze into their upper sleeves if tissues are not available. Employees should wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer after they cough, sneeze, or blow their noses.
- ✓ Employees should avoid close contact with their coworkers and residents (maintain a separation of at least 6 ft). They should avoid shaking hands and always wash their hands after contact with others.
- ✓ When entering resident apartments, a non-latex glove is a good idea. Even if employees wear gloves, they should wash their hands upon removal of the gloves in case their hand(s) became contaminated during the removal process.
- ✓ Make sure public areas are supplied with tissues and trash receptacles and a place to wash or disinfect hands.
- ✓ Keep work surfaces, telephones, computer equipment, other frequently touched surfaces, and office equipment clean. Be sure that any cleaner used is safe and will not harm employees or office equipment. Use only disinfectants registered by the EPA, and follow all directions and safety precautions indicated on the label. Do not mix products unless it is safe to do so. Additional attention should be given to surfaces, such as light switches, door knobs, toilets, television remote control, hand basins, telephones, desk surfaces, alarm clocks, table surfaces, dresser or counter tops, etc.
- ✓ Discourage employees from using other employees’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. Flu viruses may be spread when a person touches droplets left by coughs and sneezes on hard surfaces (such as desks or door knobs) or objects (such as keyboards or pens) and then touches his or her mouth or nose.
- ✓ Minimize situations where groups of people are crowded together. Use e-mail, phones, and text messages to communicate with each other. When meetings are necessary, avoid close contact by keeping a separation of at least 6 ft where possible, and assure that there is proper ventilation in the meeting room. Reduce or eliminate unnecessary social interactions, which can be very effective in controlling the spread of infectious



diseases. Reconsider all situations that permit or require employees, residents, and visitors to mingle until the pandemic is declared under control.

- ✓ Promote healthy lifestyles, including vaccination for H1N1 and seasonal flu, good nutrition, exercise, and smoking cessation. A person's overall health impacts their body's immune system and can affect their ability to fight off, or recover from, an infectious disease.

If you have questions, please contact your Risk Management Consultant, or Jim Rhoads, NJPHA-JIF Safety Director, 610-937-2694, or e-mail [james\\_rhoads@pmagroup.com](mailto:james_rhoads@pmagroup.com)

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