



Gavin Newsom  
Mayor

Mitchell H. Katz, MD  
Director of Health

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Dear San Francisco Businesses and Organizations:

As you may know, this spring a new flu virus strain, novel influenza A H1N1 (swine flu), was identified. Over the past few months this virus has spread around the world and is now considered a pandemic. Although this flu strain primarily causes mild illness, it still has the capacity to affect our community. Because there is little to no immunity in our population many people may become ill and people with existing medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe disease.

This summer we continue to test laboratory specimens, investigate cases, and provide guidance to clinicians and the public. However, we are also preparing for the flu season this fall and winter. We are planning for a resurgence of seasonal flu cases in addition to an increase in H1N1 swine flu cases. To reduce the impact of all types of flu in San Francisco we ask businesses and organizations to help us prepare for and prevent the spread of disease in our community. Below are key steps:

**Plan.** Create or refresh your organization's continuity of operations plan.

- Include a staffing plan for a reduced workforce (employees may be out sick, caring for someone ill, or taking care of children dismissed from school).
- If appropriate, consider telecommuting options for those who need to stay home.
- Train staff to implement the plan and to fill critical positions.
- Test your plan with an exercise.

For continuity planning tools, templates, and infection control recommendations see: [www.sfchcp.com/biztools.html](http://www.sfchcp.com/biztools.html)

**Stockpile materials.** Ensure that your organization has the following infection control supplies this fall:

- Tissues
- Soap and/or hand sanitizer
- Cleaning supplies
- Surgical face masks (the public may be required to wear masks if the severity of disease worsens)

**Review Personnel Policies.** Always support and encourage employees to stay home when sick.

- Ask individuals with influenza-like illness to stay home for 24 hours after symptoms resolve.
- To reduce the burden on the health care sector, allow employees who have been sick with flu-like illness to return to work without a doctor's note.
- Be aware that most employees will be unable to provide lab test results. Only individuals meeting specific criteria are eligible for novel influenza A H1N1 lab tests.
- It is not necessary to inform co-workers that they may have been exposed to an employee with influenza-like-illness or confirmed H1N1 swine flu, unless you have existing policies that require you to do so for seasonal flu.

**Educate.** Teach your employees about the flu and healthy habits that prevent the spread of disease.

- Teach healthy habits including stay home when sick, wash hands often, over your cough and sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve, clean and disinfect, and get immunized. For messages and interactive learning tools go to: [www.sfcdep.com/healthyhabits.html](http://www.sfcdep.com/healthyhabits.html)
- Find frequently asked questions and answers about seasonal flu, pandemic flu, and H1N1 swine flu in multiple languages go to: [www.sfcdep.com/fluprogram.html](http://www.sfcdep.com/fluprogram.html)
- In San Francisco, refer employees to the telephone information line 311 to speak with a live operator about their questions or concerns.

**Promote.** Encourage healthy habits in the work setting.

- Make tissues, trash cans, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer available.
- Post signs encouraging staff and visitors to cover their coughs and wash their hands. To order free signs from the health department go to: [www.sfcdep.com/materials\\_request.html](http://www.sfcdep.com/materials_request.html)
- Encourage seasonal flu shots. Consider planning a seasonal flu shot day at your organization (for info see: [www.sfcdep.com/aitcbusinesses.html](http://www.sfcdep.com/aitcbusinesses.html)). (More information about H1N1 swine flu vaccine will be made available in the fall.)

**Clean.** Maintain a clean and healthy work environment.

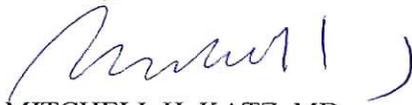
- Ensure that EPA certified disinfectants are used to frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, hand rails, bathroom surfaces, countertops).
- Keep heating and ventilation systems in good working order, in accordance with system specifications and any applicable regulations.

We strongly encourage businesses and organizations to implement the above recommendations in order to better maintain ongoing operations and services.

At this time we are not requesting that businesses report absenteeism or cases of disease to the San Francisco Department of Public Health. In addition, San Francisco Department of Public Health does not recommend that businesses or organizations stockpile or dispense antiviral medicines like Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) to employees. Most cases of influenza are mild so affected individuals should only take it under their doctor's recommendation. Stockpiling and dispensing medications could prevent antivirals from getting to the people who need them most, cause unnecessary medical side effects or complications, and overuse can lead to resistant virus strains.

We are always impressed with the commitment of San Francisco businesses and organizations to protect their employees and community. Your assistance is invaluable in our efforts to limit the impact of flu in our community. As we continue to monitor the situation we will provide updated information and guidance. Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely,



MITCHELL H. KATZ, MD  
Director of Health