

# **PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS PLAN**



City of  
**MARYLAND HEIGHTS**

**Contingency Plan for  
Minimizing the Spread of  
Pandemic Influenza**

**MAY, 2009**

## PLAN OBJECTIVES

In response to the threat of an influenza pandemic, the City of Maryland Heights has prepared this plan to meet the following objectives:

1. Establish departmental service continuity plans in the event of pandemic influenza in order to insure delivery of basic city services.
2. Mitigate the spread of pandemic influenza among employees.
3. Assist employees and their families in managing personal and/or family illnesses during a pandemic influenza outbreak.

The KEY priority will be ensuring that essential city operations continue. Each department must develop a list of service priorities and then develop plans for meeting those priorities.

Managing the pandemic—focusing on continuity of operations with considerable loss of staff, depleted resources, a struggling economy, and a nervous public—will be a considerable challenge. Planning increases the likelihood that the city will be able to continue service operations during a global health crisis.

## ASSUMPTIONS

A flu pandemic is unlike any crisis the city has encountered. No one can predict when it might arrive, where it might strike, how long it might last, and how serious its impacts might be. Caution requires that the city assume and plan for a worst-case scenario. Accordingly, the city's Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan is based on the following assumptions:

1. As many as 30 to 40 percent of the city's employees could become ill at the pandemic's peak; another 5 percent may refuse to report to work, either because they fear becoming ill or because they are caring for afflicted family members.
2. The government will not be able to perform all functions and provide all services at full capacity throughout the pandemic.
3. Any city office may be closed due to staffing shortages or community quarantine.

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF FLU AT WORKSITE

**Promoting respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette** The City of Maryland Heights will promote hygiene through a variety of methods to help reduce the spread of the flu virus at the worksite. Though respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette are simple concepts, during a pandemic they become a vital defense to a potentially dangerous outbreak.

Since indirect transmission (e.g. from hand-to-hand, or hand to contaminated object and then contaminated object to hand) is the main way in which influenza is passed from person to person, educational programs will reiterate the need for routine and frequent hand washing. Washing with plain soap, hand sanitizer lotion, alcohol or other antiseptic-based hand wash products eliminates the virus. It is important to wash hands even if protective gloves have been worn. ***Gloves are not a substitute for hand washing.***

Hand sanitizer lotion and tissues will be provided in each work site for employees to enhance proper cough and hygiene etiquette. Masks will be provided to all employees in the event of an outbreak.

The masks will be placed in each department such that they are readily available to staff. Even with the mask, employees should cover the mouth when coughing or sneezing and wash/sanitize their hands immediately thereafter. Additionally, all employees should avoid/reduce close contact with the public or other employees. The telephone or e-mail should be used to communicate whenever possible.

The city will also:

1. Disseminate information on the flu virus and how it is spread.
2. Disseminate information to employees on proper hygiene methods and other behavior activities and/or restrictions that will reduce the risk of spreading the flu virus among the workforce.
3. Post educational materials to remind employees of proper cough etiquette, hand washing, and other behaviors that will reduce the risk of infection.
4. Provide information to employees to assist them in protecting themselves and their families during a pandemic.

### **EMPLOYEES EXPOSED OR SUSPECTED OF EXPOSURE**

Employees should be conscious of their own health; those who experience any flu like symptoms should notify their immediate supervisor and stay home. If symptoms begin at work, employees should notify their immediate supervisor of the potential exposure and go home. Sick leave resulting from pandemic episodes will be processed as per the Pandemic Sick Leave (PSL) Policy.

Since the city has an obligation to protect employees and the general public, employees who exhibit symptoms of a contagious illness while at work or who report to work after exposure to such an illness may be relieved from work and sent home by their immediate supervisor or department head. Employees who are sent home under these conditions must present a release statement from a health care provider authorizing a return to work. Employees who refuse to leave when directed to do so may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **GUIDELINES TO MODIFY FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT**

**Face-to-Face:** In face-to-face meetings, individuals should limit contact. Participants should practice staying about three (3) feet apart.

**Hand-Shaking:** Employees should stop shaking hands if there is a pandemic influenza outbreak to help reduce the spread of the disease. If employees find themselves shaking hands, they should practice increased hand hygiene.

**Meetings:** Employees should limit attendance at meetings. Meetings should be suspended when the same information can be obtained with a conference call, e-mail, or through chat groups over the internet. If a face-to-face meeting is necessary, following the rules may help ensure that transmission of the virus is limited:

1. The room should be cleaned and disinfected using good house keeping techniques such as disinfecting the table, chairs, phones, and other places that one might be expected to touch.
2. Prop the door open (when doing so would not breach security) to keep employees and the public from touching the door knob.
3. Spread out as much as possible and avoid hand shaking.
4. Minimize the length of meetings.
5. Meet in large rooms.
6. Require all employees to wash their hands after leaving meetings.

7. Clean the room after each use.

**Increase Social Distancing:** Social distancing means minimizing human-to human contact in peak phases of pandemic influenza. Contacts are those persons who have had close (one yard or less) physical or confined airspace contact with an infected person within four days of that person developing symptoms. These are likely to include family members and/or other living companions, workmates (if in confined airspace environments) and possibly recreational companions. The City of Maryland Heights may cancel or postpone all city sponsored meetings/events during a flu pandemic.

The city will encourage the use of technology to facilitate social distancing by using communications networks, remote access and web access to maintain distance among employees and between employees and citizens whenever possible.

### **INFECTION CONTROL SUPPLIES**

**Hand-hygiene products, tissues, disposal receptacles** The city will identify the products or supplies needed, the sources from which to obtain them, and maintain an inventory of those items, such as hand sanitizer, tissue paper, masks, and other personal protective equipment items for use by employees in their work area. Any indication of an increased threat level will result in an automatic audit and review of inventory levels.

**Availability of medical consultation and advice** The city will use a combination of sources for medical consultation and advice, including the Center for Disease Control (CDC), web based and information formats, and the St. Louis County Health Department. An increase in the threat alert level will trigger a review to determine if medical consultation is necessary.

### **ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Trigger Events** The following events will be considered “trigger events” for implementation of all or portions of this plan:

1. The United States Federal Government through their official agencies issues a pandemic declaration for the United States, and/or
2. The State of Missouri issues a pandemic declaration for the State, and/or
3. The Mayor of the City of Maryland Heights or his designee declares a pandemic emergency for the city, and/or
4. The St. Louis County Health Department issues a directive to implement a response plan, and/or
5. Excessive employee absenteeism occurs that results in the city being in jeopardy of experiencing a pandemic related operations emergency, and/or
6. There is confirmation of large scale employee exposure to pandemic flu pathogens.

Once a flu pandemic crisis is imminent or has occurred, the City Administrator will activate the City of Maryland Heights Pandemic Flu Plan.

**Pandemic Flu Crisis Assessment** Upon notification of a pandemic flu crisis, the Pandemic Leadership Team (Mayor, City Administrator and Department Heads) will meet to:

1. Make an initial risk determination to define the extent of the crisis and determine what portions of the program need to be implemented based on that analysis.
2. Continually assess the severity of the crisis, the efficacy of the city's response and determine whether changes need to be made. If members are unable to physically meet due to governmental limitations on travel or quarantine, meetings will be held by conference call.
3. Make a determination regarding the cancellation of public meetings and, in conjunction with the Judge, Municipal Court.

**Compensation** During a pandemic, the City may require all employees who get a physical paycheck to receive that check through direct payroll deposit.

#### PANDEMIC LEAVE

During a declared influenza pandemic, the following sick leave policy will be used for all pandemic related absences.

1. All regular, full-time employees will be provided up to eighty (80) Pandemic Sick Leave (PSL) hours, in addition to any hours already earned as regular sick time.
2. To be eligible for Pandemic Sick Leave (PSL), an employee must have completed at least three (3) months of continuous employment prior to the request for the PSL leave and must have exhausted all other eligible leave prior to the receipt of PSL.
3. An employee becomes eligible for PSL when one of the following occurs:
  - a. the employee is medically diagnosed as having pandemic influenza,
  - b. the employee's spouse, child(ren) or other member of the employee's household is diagnosed as having pandemic influenza,
  - c. the city receives notification that the employee's community of residence is under quarantine as a result of a pandemic influenza epidemic; and as a result, the employee is unable to come to work,
  - d. the city receives notification that the employee's spouse's workplace or child(ren)'s school is subject to an order of quarantine or is otherwise closed as a result of a pandemic flu epidemic, and as a result, the employee is unable to come to work.
4. Pandemic sick leave hours will be treated the same as non-PSL sick leave for purposes of pay and leave accrual.
5. **Return to work after illness** Before returning to work, an employee must provide a release from the treating physician stating that the employee is not contagious and is otherwise medically able to safely return to work. If the employee fails to provide such a statement upon return, the employee's immediate supervisor must (1) notify the employee that he/she will not be allowed to work without the return-to-work authorization and (2) inform the employee that he/she must leave the worksite immediately.

**Travel restrictions** During a declared pandemic influenza outbreak, the following travel policy will be instituted:

1. Upon the announcement by the Governor or other authorized public health official that the State of Missouri is subject to a pandemic influenza outbreak, all work related travel will immediately be suspended.

2. If travel is imminent and refunds cannot or will not be made, the City Administrator may decide to allow the employee to take the prearranged trip if the employee presents a doctor's statement indicating that he/she does not have the pandemic flu virus.
3. If an announcement of a pandemic influenza outbreak is made by the Mayor of the City of Maryland Heights or his designee, the same travel ban will be implemented.
4. If an employee lives in a community that has been declared a pandemic zone by its local government, health department or other responsible entity, or is otherwise quarantined due to such an outbreak, the employee shall notify his/her department head of the announcement as soon as practical. The affected employee should refrain from travel to and from the workplace until the quarantine is lifted and the employee presents a physician's statement authorizing the return to work.

### **TELECOMMUTING AND FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES**

1. Participation in telecommuting during a pandemic may be mutually agreed upon by the employee and the department director. The employee's position must be identified as telecommuting capable. The city may, however, require an employee to telecommute, where practical, to reduce the risk of spreading the flu virus at the worksite. This will be determined on a case by case basis as work site conditions and the health status of an employee warrant.
2. Telecommuters may cease their participation in the program at any time, unless they are required to work in the program due to illness or other worksite separation needs. These will be determined by the employee's department director. The department director may cancel the agreement at any time when it is determined that continuation would not be productive, efficient or in the best interest of the city.
3. Telecommuters will be compensated as if duties were being performed at the in city work location. Overtime may not be worked unless authorized in advance by the department director.
4. Telecommuters are subject to the same rules and procedures as other employees and are covered by worker's compensation when performing official work duties at the alternate work site.
5. Telecommuters must verify in writing that their home provides work space that is free of safety and fire hazards and agree that the city will be held harmless against any and all claims, excluding worker's compensation claims that result from working at a home office.
6. No employee engaged in telecommuting may conduct face-to-face business from home.
7. The City of Maryland Heights is not required to provide equipment for telecommuting; however, the city may provide all or part of the equipment necessary for completing work assignments, including the installation and maintenance of city-owned equipment at the employee's home. The city will not cover the cost of repair or maintenance of the telecommuter's personal equipment. Equipment needs will be determined by the department's need during the pandemic event on a case-by-case basis.
8. The city will establish security controls and conditions for use of city equipment. The telecommuting employee must use approved safeguards to protect city equipment and supplies. All official city records, files and documents must be protected from unauthorized

disclosure or damage and returned safely to the office at the conclusion of the telecommuting assignment.

9. Employees on probation or on a performance improvement plan are not eligible for telecommuting. Exceptions may be made if warranted due to the pandemic influenza crisis.

**Procedures:** Employees interested in participating in the telecommuting program during a pandemic crisis should contact their supervisor to discuss the feasibility of telecommuting. They must hold a position that the city approves for telecommuting.

If the employee and the position are deemed suitable for telecommuting, a Telecommuting Agreement must be signed by the telecommuter, the department director and the City Administrator prior to beginning the program. Exceptions may be made to facilitate emergency situations under the pandemic event as determined by the department director.

### **FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE**

Work schedules will be determined by the service needs of the department/division and will be managed accordingly. Once schedules are defined and communicated to employees, an employee who requests a deviation to that schedule must do so in writing to the department head for approval. The department head will determine an appropriate schedule for an employee to best fit the needs of the department during a pandemic influenza event. The department head may require employees to change work schedules in order to reduce the risk of the pandemic influenza spreading at the work site. The department head may develop alternative work schedules for one or more employees with approval of the City Administrator.

### **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN – PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

To ensure effective emergency communications, the Human Resources office will ensure the following activities:

1. Set-up a system to track pandemic flu related absences.
2. Provide a notification for supervisors listing absent employees.

### **DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF MATERIALS**

**Pandemic fundamentals** The city will do the following to keep employees up to date on the pandemic:

1. Relay information to employees through the e-mail, and mailings to employees at their homes, if requested.
2. Develop and distribute flyers containing accurate and up-to-date information about the situation.
3. Provide a central bulletin board in city facilities to post information.