



August 19, 2009

Dear Employer:

The Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Homeland Security are releasing updated guidance for businesses and all employers in preparation for the fall flu season and the likelihood of a resurgence of 2009 H1N1 influenza outbreaks in the U.S. This guidance can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/workplace.htm> and is geared toward preparing employers for the steps they need to take now and for the fall. We are writing to enlist your support in encouraging preparedness for H1N1 flu within the business community.

In April of this year, a new H1N1 influenza virus was identified. Outbreaks have continued in the United States and around the world, indicating that a global pandemic is underway. CDC anticipates that 2009 H1N1 flu will circulate along with regular influenza viruses and states it is likely we will see more cases, more hospitalizations, and more deaths from this virus.

We are asking for your help. Employers should develop specific plans to protect employees and maintain operations during the upcoming flu season. Those plans should be based on the risk of influenza exposure facing employees during their work activities and how best to protect them. Companies that provide critical infrastructure services, such as power and telecommunications, have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation.

An important way to reduce the spread of influenza is for sick people to stay home. CDC recommends that individuals with influenza-like illness remain at home at least 24 hours after they are free of fever. While every business has different workforce and resource needs, all employers should plan now to encourage sick workers to stay home without penalty, and to institute flexible workplace and leave policies, including telework and flexible schedules, for workers who may need to stay home. When influenza is widespread in an area, the demands on medical providers and facilities could be great, so the public and private sectors will need to work together to limit any unnecessary burden on the health care system. For this reason, CDC recommends that employers waive requirements for doctors' notes for sick workers to validate their influenza-like illness or authorize their return to work.

For ongoing updates in both preparing for and responding to 2009 H1N1 influenza, we encourage you to visit the Federal Government's website: www.flu.gov. This site will be updated continually with the latest information.

Thank you for helping to reduce the illness that 2009 H1N1 flu may cause, and for your support to minimize the social and economic costs of the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security

Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Commerce

Hilda L. Solis
Secretary of Labor

Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Health and Human Services