



STAT



Safety Talk and Tips

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This issue of STAT will concentrate it's effort to provide information on H1N1 and the seasonal flu. Over the past few months, there has been lots of published information concerning the possibility of a pandemic outbreak of flu. This issue will focus information about the flu, how to reduce the risk of getting the flu, exactly what are the NWS options as an employee and as an employer, and much more. To make this issue timely, the issue is being released early.

Ten Ways You Can Stay Healthy at Work

You can protect yourself and others by following these action steps:

- 1) Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use an alcohol based hand rub if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- 2) Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes. Germs spread this way.
- 3) Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- 4) Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash cans.
- 5) Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean, such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
- 6) Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If you need to use a coworker's phone, desk, or other equipment, clean it first.
- 7) Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, tiredness, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever. CDC recommends that people with flu-like illness stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- 8) Get vaccinated against seasonal flu. It can protect you against seasonal flu viruses, but not against 2009 H1N1.
- 9) Ask your doctor if you should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. People recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available include health care workers, children, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). People living with or caring for infants under 6 months old should also be vaccinated to protect these children who are too young to be vaccinated.
- 10) Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, and exercise.

Learn more. Visit www.flu.gov or contact CDC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: (888) 232-6348

cdeinfo@cdc.gov

H1N1 Preparedness Plan of Action



NWS Headquarters recently issued a memo to serve as a plan of action to provide guidance to address H1N1 pandemic concerns and provide preventative measures to protect the NWS workforce. The memo addressed the following:

Physical Mitigation

Preventative measures to mitigate H1N1 threats in NWS facilities include, but are not limited to the following:

Provide soap or alcohol based hand sanitizer.

Provide disinfectant wipes for each office. Wipes should be used to disinfect keyboards, phones and desktops of work area, and must be safe for use on electronics.

If conditions warrant the need, limit the number of public tours.

Continuity of Operations

Each office will utilize the Local Office Team (LOT) process to develop a contingency schedule for maintaining operations with reduced staff during an outbreak of H1N1. The contingency schedule will be utilized until it is no longer sustainable or the need ends, whichever comes first.

NWS Headquarters, NCEP and Regional Headquarters will each develop plans to assist subordinate offices and/or offices unable to sustain the contingency staffing schedule or unable to maintain critical equipment due to illness of the office's staff.

Alternative Work Arrangements

During a large scale H1N1 outbreak, where acceptable by the local manager and when compatible with the accomplishment of mission critical activities, existing telework agreements will, as appropriate, be temporarily modified and episodic telework agreements will be considered for employees who currently do not have an existing telework agreement, to maximize employees' opportunities to work from an alternative location.

Human Resources Flexibilities (i.e., Work Schedules, Absences, Leave Use, etc.)

NWS managers and supervisors should become familiar with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Pandemic Influenza information website. OPM has updated and developed policies on leave, pay, hiring, alternative work arrangements, and other critical human capital issues pertaining to pandemic influenza.

Influenza Information and Planning in NOAA

All managers and supervisors should become familiar with the pandemic influenza information and any changes in guidance or instruction at the NOAA Homeland Security Program Office website.



Cold vs. Flu

The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because these two types of illnesses have similar flu-like symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations. Because colds and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Special tests that usually must be done within the first few days of illness can be carried out, when needed to tell if a person has the flu.

The Medical University of South Carolina has developed the following symptom checker:

<https://cancr.library.musc.edu/dev/H1N1/>

Influenza Symptoms

The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

These symptoms are usually referred to as "flu-like symptoms."



Signs and Symptoms of the Common Cold

- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Coughing
- Watery eyes
- Mild headache
- Mild body aches

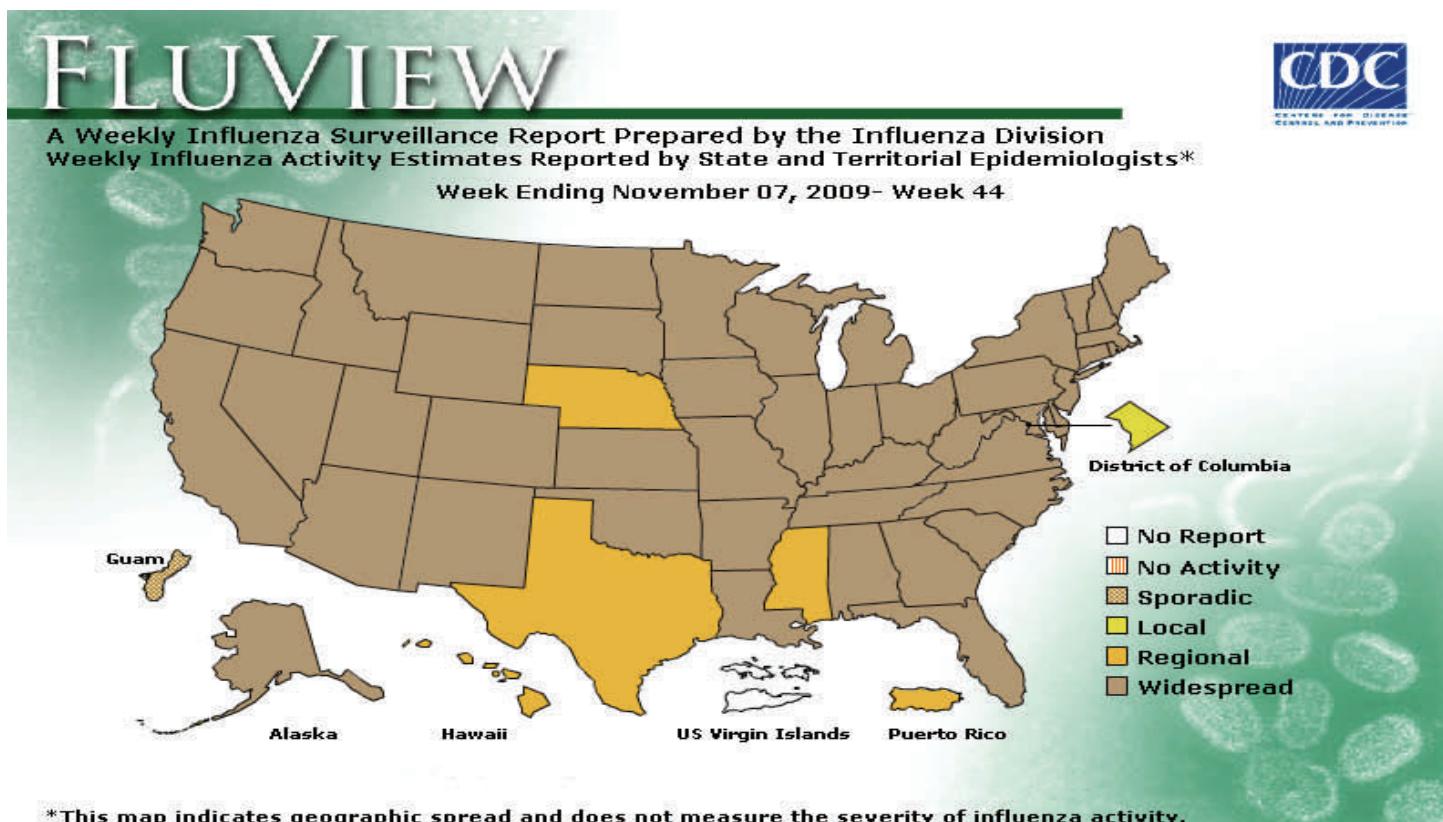


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Latest News on H1N1 from the CDC and World Health Organization

As of October 30, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the pandemic H1N1 virus was the dominant flu virus around the world. The CDC was reporting widespread outbreaks in all but two states (South Carolina and Hawaii) and the District of Columbia.



Of over 3,834 specimens tested during the week ending November 7 and 30% were positive for flu virus with 100% of those being H1N1. Each week has shown a steady increase in both overall positive tests for the flu and the percentage that is H1N1. October saw a definite jump in cases. From August 30 to October 24, there were 12,466 laboratory-confirmed H1N1 cases associated with hospitalization and 530 deaths. 25,985 pneumonia and influenza syndrome-based hospitalizations and 2,916 deaths were reported to the CDC. During the week ending November 7, there were 35 flu associated pediatric deaths and 26 of those were from H1N1. All of these numbers are considered above the epidemic threshold. The overall number of flu cases is already well above normal for a flu season and it is particularly above normal for this early in the season.

Flu Tidbit

The Influenza Pandemic of 1918

The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more people than the Great War, known today as World War I (WWI), at somewhere between 20 and 40 million people. It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in four-years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351. Known as "Spanish Flu" or "La Grippe" the influenza of 1918-1919 was a global disaster.



About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome. Please send all comments to Kevin Murray.

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!