



Novel Influenza A H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses

Mass Gatherings

1. Yesterday at Governor Culver's press conference, he mentioned that public/community gatherings may not be able to occur. What constitutes as a public gathering? Is there an approximate number of people that is considered a community event? For example, 20 people? 50 people?

There is not a defined attendee number for large gatherings. Each situation would need to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

It should be noted however, that currently CDC is only recommending that large gatherings linked to settings and institutions with laboratory – confirmed cases be cancelled. Other large gatherings in the community **should not be cancelled** at this time. However, large gatherings would present an opportunity to educate attendees on ways to prevent themselves and their families from becoming ill.

Travel

1. Any guidance on international travel? We have people ready to go overseas and some returning.

CDC has issued a Travel Health Warning to avoid nonessential travel to Mexico. This warning can be found at the following link:

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluMexico.aspx> .

CDC has not issued Travel Health Warnings to any other countries (related to Novel Influenza A H1N1).

After an employee returns from an area that has reported cases of swine flu, that employee should closely monitor his/her health for 7 days. If he/she becomes ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu like cough and sore throat and possibly vomiting and diarrhea during this period, he/she should seek medical care and stay home until the flu-like illness signs and symptoms are resolved. IDPH is not recommending that those without symptoms stay home from work just because they have traveled to areas with swine flu cases.

Workplace

1. People who have traveled to affected areas that have no symptoms. What is the guidance? The CDC website leaves some room for interpretation. Some companies are requiring them to stay at home anywhere from 72 hours to 7 days. Our interpretation would be that if they have no symptoms that they may come to work. If the guidance is to remain at home, for what duration?

After an employee returns from an area where Novel Influenza A (H1N1) has been confirmed, that employee should closely monitor his/her health for 7 days. If he/she becomes ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu like cough and sore throat and possibly vomiting and diarrhea during this period, he/she should stay home and seek medical care until 24 hours after the symptoms have resolved. IDPH is not recommending that anyone who is not ill be quarantined strictly based upon travel history.

2. People who have been exposed to someone who has flu symptoms but who not diagnosed with the swine flu and exhibits no symptoms themselves. Same question on guidance on being in the workplace. Again, our interpretation would be if they are not symptomatic, they could come to work.

IDPH and CDC only recommend those with flu-like illness symptoms (which include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting) should stay home from work or public places until 24 hours after symptoms resolve.

3. Wearing of masks. Again, mixed message on CDC site and a conference call I sit on with the CDC. The CDC person said there was limited evidence that masks were effective unless you are in a healthcare setting or when taking care of a sick person. Is there guidance to clarify when masks should be worn in a work setting?

According to the CDC, when crowded settings or close contact with others cannot be avoided, the use of facemasks or respirators **in areas where transmission of Novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus has been confirmed** should be considered as follows:

- Whenever possible, rather than relying on the use of facemasks or respirators, avoid crowded situations and close contact with people who might be ill. Frequently performing hand hygiene will also reduce the risk of becoming ill.
- Facemasks can be considered for use by individuals who enter crowded settings where swine flu is present, both to protect their nose and mouth from other people's coughs and to reduce the wearers' likelihood of coughing on others; the time spent in crowded settings should be as short as possible.

- Respirators should be considered for use by individuals for whom close contact with an infectious person is unavoidable. This can include selected individuals who must care for a sick person (e.g., family member with a respiratory infection) at home. Please see www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/cade/swineflu_guidelines_using_facemasks.pdf for additional information on respirators and masks.

These interim recommendations will be revised as new information about the use of facemasks and respirators in the current setting becomes available. For more information about human infection with swine influenza virus, visit the [CDC Swine Flu website](#).

At this time we do not have evidence of community transmission of Novel Influenza A (H1N1) in Iowa and therefore these recommendations would not apply.

4. CDC's guidance includes a statement to "avoid close contact with others". Some are interpreting that as "stay at home" which I'm not sure is the intent since they clearly state when you have symptoms to stay at home.

IDPH only recommends that people with flu-like illness (which include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting) stay home until 24 hours after resolved.

Terminology

1. Do you think we should use the Influenza A (H1N1) terminology rather than calling it the swine influenza, in recognition that we don't want to contribute to the hog/pork scare, which is a huge industry in Iowa?

The Center for Disease Preventions and Control (CDC) is now referring to the illness as H1N1 Flu. Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is calling this illness Novel Influenza A (H1N1). We are in the process of changing the name on all of our website and document. This change will take several days to complete.

Legal Authorities

1. What are the local laws in regards to mandatory temperature checks before entering the work place, sending workers home if they have symptoms, refusing entry and/or any other laws that would relate to the current situation?

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) does not recommend mandatory temperature checks and is not aware of any local laws requiring such. IDPH and local health

departments do have isolation and quarantine authorities that can be implemented in certain situations to protect the public's health.

2. If the governor declares a health emergency, what specifically could that mean for businesses and next steps for us to consider?

There are several planning checklists for businesses posted on the IDPH Website at: http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/swine_flu_theworkplace.asp Businesses should be considering business continuity planning and education of employees on prevention measures.