



SAFETY & HEALTH

AVIAN FLU UPDATE

In the event of an Avian flu pandemic, private and public sector entities will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy.

Pandemicflu.gov offers a contingency plan with six separate areas of consideration on how organizations should plan for the impact of a pandemic on their employees:

1. Forecast and allow for employee absences.
2. Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact.
3. Encourage and track annual influenza vaccinations.
4. Evaluate employee access to and availability of healthcare services.
5. Evaluate employee access to and availability of mental health and social services.
6. Identify employees with special needs and incorporate their requirements into your preparedness plan.

According to an article in Business Week — Avian Flu: Execs Think The Unthinkable, corporations and government agencies are preparing for the worst.

Increasingly, the threat of a global pandemic is beginning to creep into executive suites. "It's a giant leap from a year ago, when it wasn't on the business community's radar screen," says Dorothy Teeter, Director of Public Health for Seattle & King County, Wash.

Pitney Bowes in Stamford, Conn. is ensuring that large numbers of employees can work from home. And 17 U.S. airports have or are setting up quarantine programs. The lesson from past megadisasters is that "you



have to think the unthinkable," says Christian Crews, Director of Futures Strategy at Pitney Bowes.

Corning is asking its business units a series of tough questions, says Director of Health Services Dr. James Schuppert: "Could you run your facility with 30% to 40% absenteeism? Do you have the infrastructure you need?"

There's an emerging consensus on best practices for companies. One broad category is finding backups for suppliers or essential work functions. "Cross-training of employees is crucial," explains Margaret Read, a crisis manager at Cingular Wireless in Redmond, Wash.

The bottom line is be prepared — the more you and your employees know, the better off you'll be.

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