



H1N1, Pandemic Planning, & Communicating During Crisis

May 6, 2009

Agenda

- **Kevin Leuer, *Minnesota Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management***
 - **Update on H1N1 Flu Virus**
- **Laura Kushner, *League of Minnesota Cities***
 - **Pandemic planning**
- **Stephanie Weiss, *League of Minnesota Cities***
 - **Communicating with the public and the media**
- **Your Questions**

Kevin Leuer, HSEM

- State preparedness and response to this wave of H1N1
- Planning for another wave
- Things cities should be thinking about

Laura Kushner, LMC

- H1N1 Flu basics & pandemic planning
- Local Responsibilities
- Priority Action Steps

Flu Pandemic Review

- Flu pandemics caused by new viruses
- Humans have no pre-existing immunity
- Pandemic predictions:
 - Large outbreak in waves 4-6 weeks apart
 - Illnesses (30% of population)
 - Absences (30% of workforce)
 - Deaths (2% of infected 30%)

Flu Pandemic Background

How does it affect me?

- **Personally**
 - self, spouse, children
 - friends, relatives, community
- **As employer**
 - responsible for employees
- **As city official**
 - responsible for city functions

It's up to you (to run your city)

- Feds will be advisory
- State & county role - Public health; advisory; public safety; coordination
- City's role is to continue its services
 - Can't rely totally on help from others
 - Priority: 24/7/365 services (police, fire, water)
 - Some services may shut down (recreation)
 - Use of community buildings (health care)
 - Assist with mortuary services

It's up to you (to run your city)

Potential obstacles:

- **Employee absenteeism**
 - Illness, caring for family, fear
- **Obtaining supplies**
 - Global economy = more vulnerable
- **Relying on other services**
 - Internet, medical, transportation

An additional city role to consider:

- **Informing residents and businesses about emergency planning and flu prevention**
- **Helping others may ease the burden on state and local governments**

Action Steps – First

- Review/develop pandemic plan
- Exchange/update emergency phone numbers - key staff
 - Communication plan for other staff
- Protect important documents/information
- Establish authority for critical decisions & back-up

Action Steps – Second

- **Communicate with employees:**
 - Personal hygiene and social distancing
 - Stay home if symptoms develop; supervisory authority to send employees home
 - Where to get updates from city if partial shut-down
- **Identify essential functions; cross-train staff; identify alternative staffing & backup**

Action Steps – Third

- Establish/modify sick leave/HR policies
- Develop telecommuting plans and associated technology
- Contact County, Community Leaders
 - Confirm their role, your role
 - Where/how you can help each other
- Stay alert to developments and for Governor calling state of emergency

Stephanie Weiss, LMC

Communications Tips

- Reinforcing readiness
- Working with the media

Communicate now to reinforce community readiness

- Current info from Minnesota Department of Health
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/index.html>
- Cover your Cough
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/>
- Business Preparedness
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/pandemic/lph.html>
- Family preparedness – <http://www.codeready.org>

Ways to share information

- Messages about readiness/preparedness can be communicated via:
 - Utility bill stuffers
 - Newsletter
 - Community Access Television
 - Electronic (Website, Twitter, Facebook)
- City can partner and coordinate with:
 - Schools, County, Chamber of Commerce, Faith Community

Working with the media

Review response/pandemic plans

- May designate Public Information Officer
- May include direction on chain of command
- May discuss coordination of information with other agencies, including Homeland Security Emergency Management, Minnesota Department of Health and Local Board of Health, others

Working with the media

Designate spokesperson if not already identified. This person should be able to:

- Speak with credibility
- Be up-to-date on situation
- Respond professionally, in timely manner
- Coordinate with other agencies as needed

Benefit of designated spokesperson

- Greater accuracy, consistency in response
- Staff, electeds know where to direct media

Working with the media

Responding to a media inquiry

- May feel overwhelmed by media
- Remember: media is conduit to public
- Local media most trusted by residents
- Hold regular press briefings at designated times, location
- Coordinate information with other agencies
- Check and re-check facts to ensure accuracy, consistency

Working with the media

- **Before responding to inquiries:**
 - Take a deep breath
 - Check your facts
 - Do not speculate
- **Types of questions to anticipate**
 - Who/how many people impacted
 - What is being done to respond/contain
 - How continue service delivery
 - How maintain safety, ensure access to food, water, medicine, other if directed to stay home

Resources

- LMC Basic Crisis Communications Guide
www.lmc.org/media/document/1/crisisguideoverview.pdf
- Crisis Communications 101
www.lmnc.org/media/document/1/crisiscommunications101.pdf
- Stephanie Weiss sweiss@lmc.org

QUESTIONS?

