



# fast facts

advancing safety, health, and workplace rights in the legislative branch

## Pandemic Flu

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A pandemic is a global disease outbreak marked by serious illness that spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population. The 1918 influenza pandemic is regarded as the most deadly single human disease outbreak in history. An estimated 25 to 30 percent of the 1.8 billion people in the world became ill. At least 25-50 million of those infected died in less than a year, including over 500,000 Americans.

There is a potential pandemic threat from the H5N1 Avian influenza, known as the “bird flu.” More than half of those infected with this virus have died. At present the H5N1 virus has only been transmitted from birds to humans. Health experts anticipate that if the H5N1 virus mutates and becomes easily transmitted from human to human, there could be over 2 billion infected and as many as 180-360 million deaths worldwide.



Avian Flu Virus

A pandemic outbreak of H5N1 or any other virus would immediately affect employees and workplace operations in a negative way. Planning for this type of non-traditional emergency is important in order to protect the health and safety of legislative branch employees and minimize the impact on society and the economy. Currently, there is no central Pan-

demic Flu Plan for congressional offices. Each office should develop its own plan — with reference to the resources listed below — that should account for visitors and assign roles and responsibilities.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website provides pandemic plan preparation guidance. These guides can help congressional offices identify exposure and health risk levels in workplace settings. Appropriate control measures that include good hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing, the use of personal protective equipment, and staying home from work when ill are also included.

### Consider the following when planning for a pandemic outbreak in the workplace:

- Identify essential operations functions
- Determine essential and non-essential personnel
- Prepare succession strategy to account for absenteeism
- Assess equipment requirements
- Consider telecommuting possibilities
- Evaluate computer/server requirements and upkeep
- Ensure the safety and health of employees while at work
- Communicate with employees away from the job
- Plan for payroll, benefit and other human resource functions
- Verify pandemic information on and off campus
- Prepare for change in patterns of commerce including interrupted supply delivery

### Sustaining the workplace during a pandemic outbreak:

- Prepare and implement an effective pandemic plan
- Communicate with appropriate agencies regarding the status of the pandemic
- Train employees and conduct table top exercises at all levels of the organization
- Coordinate with appropriate local authorities
- Protect employees who are required to report to work
- Offer medical evaluations of employees who report to work and become ill
- Ensure that ill employees receive care and arrive at their destinations safely
- Plan for and provide Personal Protective Equipment
- Stockpile and maintain equipment and supplies

### Visit the following CDC websites for additional information:

- Cover Your Cough  
[www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/cover\\_cough.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/cover_cough.htm)
- Hand Hygiene Guidelines Fact Sheet  
[www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/fs021025.html](http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/fs021025.html)

## Infection control precautions employees can take:

All employees should follow basic hygiene practices to prevent illness. Many infectious diseases can be spread by human hands. Soiled hands are an effective means of delivering infectious material (e.g., saliva or other body fluids that may contain viruses) to the nose or eyes, where they can enter the body. Hand washing is an important way to reduce exposure to common infectious diseases. Cleaning hands with soap and water removes potentially infectious material from the skin. Clean hands before preparing food, eating, or touching one's face, and after handling soiled material (e.g., used tissues, lavatory surfaces), coughing or sneezing, and using the toilet. Waterless alcohol-based hand gels may be used when soap is not available.

## The following steps should be taken if employees are ill:

- Employees should not come to work, or, if they arrive ill, they should be sent home
- If they become ill on the job, they should do the following:
  - \* Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or hands when coughing or sneezing
  - \* Put used tissue in a wastebasket
  - \* Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel immediately after coughing or sneezing
  - \* Avoid close contact with coworkers (social distancing)



Cover sneeze

## fast stats

### OSHA Standards to Reference:

There are no specific OSHA regulations for pandemic influenza, however the following citations could apply:

- Section 215 of the Congressional Accountability Act, 2 U.S.C. §1341
- OSHA Act, General Duty 5(a) (1)

### OSHA publications:

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3327pandemic.pdf>

- Pandemic Preparedness and Response Guidance For Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers
- Proposed Guidance On Workplace Stockpiling of Respirators and Facemasks for Pandemic Influenza
- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic

### Agencies to Reference for information and updates:

Office of Attending Physician (OAP) is an on-site source for reliable medical information. The OAP website <http://attendingphysician.house.gov> on the U.S. House of Representatives intranet provides Pandemic Flu updates and recommendations on basic hygiene and social distancing procedures. Note: This website may not be accessible to all employing offices.

U.S. Government access to avian and pandemic flu information  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

The World Health Organization (WHO)  
[www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov/flu/avian](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
[www.fema.gov/emergency/reports/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/reports/index.shtm)



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