

## WIDESPREAD ILLNESS PLANNING FOR EMPLOYERS

### Planning Checklist

Employers are required to protect employees and keep the workplace safe from recognized hazards. A Disaster Plan is a key component of workplace safety and should include pandemic preparedness. Businesses that are prepared can help limit the negative impact on the economy as well as the local community that widespread illness can create. The following checklist can help you prepare now and may help you prepare for other unplanned emergencies:

#### Planning for a reduced workforce

##### HUMAN RESOURCES

- Prepare for HR issues, including sick leave and flexible work policies
- Establish policies for preventing the spread of illness at work and provide infection control supplies (hand-hygiene products, tissues and waste receptacles)
- Identify planning team/resources
- Find up-to-date reliable pandemic information, if applicable
- Guidelines to modify frequency and type of in-person interactions, if applicable
- Educate employees on how to prepare at home
- Encourage annual influenza vaccinations for employees
- Evaluate employee access to health and social services during a pandemic event

##### BUSINESS CONTINUITY

- Dedicate resources and time for planning
- Identify key-contacts with backups
- Prioritize critical functions
- Develop internal and external messaging
- Determine what work will continue, be reduced or suspended
- Cross-train employees
- Evaluate interdependencies
- Anticipate supply-chain issues
- Verify suppliers' pandemic illness plans
- Create partnerships
- Implement, train, test and revise plan periodically

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### Protecting Employees

Illnesses like the flu (influenza) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Germs from one sneeze can travel up to 26 feet at 100 miles per hour and can suspend in the air for up to 10 minutes, making it virtually impossible to get away from germs when there is a contagious person in the workplace.

#### How to stop the spread of germs

**Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.** Cover your mouth and nose or use the inside of your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Immediately throw away used tissues and clean your hands and disinfect exposed surfaces.

**Clean your hands often.** When available, wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds. Soap and scrubbing are what remove germs from your hands. When soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help prevent spreading germs.

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs can live for 2 hours or more on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables, and are often spread when a person touches a contaminated surface and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.

**Stay home when you are sick.** When you are sick or have flu symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed. Your employer may require a doctor's note for an excused absence. Remember keeping your distance from others may protect them from getting sick. Common flu symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

**Clean and disinfect the workplace.** Pay close attention to warnings and directions on product labels. Wear gloves at a minimum and do not mix chemicals. Handle waste appropriately and wash hands after cleaning.