

# Swine Flu - what to do this week!

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Swine Flu has taken us all by surprise, so time is of the essence. Here are essential tips on what to do this week and some tips on what not to do this week from a Fluready perspective. Summary: This is a new strain of influenza that has the potential to be a new pandemic strain - but WHO have not called it a pandemic &ndash; yet, it may not sustain continued transmission and it may not be highly virulent but it as an excellent time to review your pandemic preparedness. Don&rsquo;t try to complete or revise a long winded organisational pandemic plan this week. Do communicate with your staff about Swine Flu today or at least by tomorrow (see the model communication transcript below) Do focus on developing short protocols, one to two pages, perhaps dot pointed that provide the framework for how your organisation will respond to Swine Flu and base these protocols on the concerns of your staff Do reconvene your pandemic committee Do make multijurisdictional links. Do enhance respiratory etiquette and hygiene. Do listen to the audio version of this if you are too busy! Listen to it here by clicking on the audio presentation below: Audio Presentation 27 April The long version&hellip; As I was reading the snippets on Swine Flu coming out of CDC and WHO this week, I felt an uncanny sense of déjà vu. I have been involved in five pandemic exercises since 2005 and the Swine Flu updates read disarmingly like the fake scenarios we have received going into these exercises. Most of the exercise scenarios included a pandemic strain of influenza emerging in a developing country (in this case Mexico) but not being recognised as a new strain until it hit travellers returning to a developed country with modern surveillance and laboratory facilities (e.g. USA). All of the exercises focused on a bird flu strain and more recently H5N1, however, now that this strain appears to be spreading relatively easily from person to person it is somewhat academic whether it is of pig or avian origin. Given that the USA is already claiming they cannot contain this strain of influenza and cases, while not confirmed, are suspected in multiple countries, we should expect cases to occur in Australia. There are about 400 visitors from Mexico per month entering Australia and approximately 400 to 800 Australians return from Mexico each month. Additionally, there are tens of thousands of tourist movements between the USA and Australia each month. This is a new strain of influenza that has the potential to be a new pandemic strain - but WHO have not called it a pandemic yet - it may not sustain continued person to person transmission and it may not be highly virulent. While there are many deaths suspected to be associated with Swine Flu the illness has been relatively mild in the USA with no deaths and only minimal and brief hospitalisation. But it as an excellent time to review your pandemic preparedness. So based on my experience with responding rapidly to evolving pandemic scenarios and attempting to plough threw huge and partly finished plans consider the following dos and donts. Don&rsquo;t try to complete or revise a long winded organisational pandemic plan this week. Don&rsquo;t have precious staff resources sequestered in an office to &ldquo;finish the plan&rdquo; by Friday. It cant be done well and it may not be read by anyone. The resources can be better used addressing the &ldquo;do&rsquo;s&rdquo; below. Do communicate with your staff about Swine Flu today or at least by tomorrow (see the model communication transcript below) This is the time to rapidly open up two way communication with your staff, they have Google, so they can find lots of information, steer them to reliable sources. Ask your staff what they are concerned about and tailor your protocols toward their concerns. Capture the concerns of staff at regular staff meetings or if appropriate during a special meeting to address Swine Flu concerns (e.g. Travel/hospitality industry will likely convene special meetings). Some questions might be better addressed in small work teams by the supervisor. Ask staff what they need or what their family needs to ensure they can come to work or even work from home if necessary. Two reliable sources of information are the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> and the WHO <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html> And for Australia <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/panflu/publishing.nsf/Content/home-1> (note this has not been updated with Swine Influenza information on 26th April) Do reconvene your pandemic committee Many organisations have let their pandemic committee lapse, now is the time to reconvene and conduct a quick audit of where you and develop weekly priority lists. You can use the planning spreadsheet at Fluready.net to quickly audit your state of preparedness. Do focus on developing short protocols, one to two pages, perhaps dot pointed that provide the framework for how your organisation will respond to Swine Flu and base these protocols on the concerns of your staff. In emergent situation it is better to have short tailored protocols for key functions rather than long plans that people have to leaf through to find relevance for their particular situation. Focus on the time you have to achieve the outcome you need - for example, if you need a protocol for referring sick workers to hospital or defining core functions to maintain in the organisation during a pandemic try setting a two or three hour deadline to produce it, even if only in dot points and circulate it as a &ldquo;working draft&rdquo; to be revised over the week. Check out our white paper at [Flutracking.net](http://Flutracking.net), many of the protocols will probably work for your organisation. Additionally, peruse the blog on Fluready.net we have summaries and links to some of the best resources produced by other organisations to shortcut your pandemic preparedness. Do enhance respiratory etiquette and hygiene. Now is the time to put up those posters (samples in the Fluready.net whitepaper) and begin to ensure that sick people do not come into work or stay home from work (again, sample protocols in the Fluready.net whitepaper). Do make multijurisdictional links. Now is the time to start talking vertically up and down your supply/service chain and with other stakeholders, collaborative networks perform better so insert yourself actively into a network by sharing your own planning insights and resources. Share this email for example and ask others to share similar resources with you. Do listen to the audio version of this if you are too busy! Also, your organisation might be interested in joining a research project I supervise at the University of Newcastle &ndash; Flutracking.net &ndash; participants spend about 15 seconds per week reporting on flu-like symptoms to help us track influenza around

the country. More information is available at [www.flutracking.net](http://www.flutracking.net) Sample communication to staff: Dear staff, You will likely have heard about the identification of a new strain of influenza, currently referred to as "Swine Flu", in the USA and Mexico and potentially in other countries. While there have been deaths suspected to be associated with Swine Flu the illness has been relatively mild in the USA with no deaths and only minimal and brief hospitalisation. Staff welfare is our major concern so at this early stage we are taking the following actions: - list all actions here e.g. enhancing respiratory etiquette, - keeping ill persons at home - reviewing stockpiles of alcohol hand gels, masks or antivirals as appropriate Please share any concerns you may have with your manager or with our (OH&S manager or pandemic coordinator) All relevant information for staff health and safety will be available at (insert intranet link) and the following websites provide useful and reliable information: CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> and the WHO <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>