

THE UOSH  
SAFETY LINE  
MAY 2009



MAY NEWSLETTER

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- You cannot get the H1N1 virus from eating pork.
- You can protect yourself from the H1N1 virus by: washing you hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to avoid transferring the virus
- Stay home if you are sick
- Visit the CDC website for more information

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# H1N1 Influenza

By now everyone has heard about the H1N1 virus and many questions have been asked regarding how to protect ourselves and our employees. So much information is available on the OSHA website ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)), the federal pandemic website [www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html) Center for Disease Control website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/>) It is very important to obtain information about the H1N1 virus from official sources.

The following information is available in an OSHA publication titled "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic" (OSHA 3327-02N 2007) located on the OSHA website [http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza\\_pandemic.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html)

For most employers, protecting their employees will depend on emphasizing proper hygiene (disinfecting hands and surfaces) and practicing social distancing. Social distancing means reducing the frequency, proximity, and duration of contact between people (both employees and customers) to reduce the chances of spreading pandemic influenza from person-to-person. All employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices.

Occupational safety and health professionals use a framework called the "hierarchy of controls" to select ways of dealing with workplace hazards. The hierarchy of controls prioritizes intervention strategies based on the premise that the best way to control a hazard is to systematically remove it from the workplace, rather than relying on employees to reduce their exposure. In the setting of a pandemic, this hierarchy should be used in concert with current public health recommendations. The types of measures that may be used to protect yourself, your employees, and your customers (listed from most effective to least effective) are: [engineering controls](#), [administrative controls](#), [work practices](#), and [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#). Most employers will use a combination of control methods. There are advantages and disadvantages to each type of control measure when considering the ease of implementation, effectiveness, and cost. For example, hygiene and social distancing can be implemented relatively easily and with little expense, but this control method requires employees to modify and maintain their behavior, which may be difficult to sustain. On the other hand, installing clear plastic barriers or a drive-through window will be more expensive and take a longer time to implement, although in the long run may be more effective at preventing transmission during a pandemic. Employers must evaluate their particular workplace to develop a plan for protecting their employees that may combine both immediate actions as well as longer term solutions.

Upcoming Topic:

June 2009  
Personal Safety in the Summer Heat

Do you have a topic you would like to see feature in a future Safety Line?

E-mail your suggestions

Contact Us:

Utah Occupational Safety and Health Compliance  
801-580-6901

Utah Occupational Safety and Health Consultation Program  
801-530-6855

Utah Labor Commission

**Let's look at the four controls and how they are used in the workplace:**

**Engineering Controls:** Engineering controls are items that are put into place to help separate the employee from the carrier of the pandemic. Examples are: installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, installing a drive-through window for customer service, specialized negative pressure ventilation for some limited healthcare settings.

**Administrative Controls:** Administrative controls include controlling employee's exposure by scheduling their work tasks in ways that minimize their exposure levels. Examples are: developing policies that encourage ill employees to stay at home without fear of any reprisals, discontinuation of unessential travel to locations with high illness transmission rates, practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees such as e-mail, websites, and teleconferences.

**Work Practices:** Work practices are things that your employees can do on a daily basis to protect themselves from the virus. Examples are: resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, hand sanitizers, encourage employees to obtain a season influenza vaccine (this helps to prevent illness from season influenza strains that may continue to circulate), provide education and training on influenza risk factors, protective barriers, and proper behaviors (for example, cough etiquette and care of personal protective equipment)

**Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):** PPE is equipment that your employees can wear or use to provide a barrier between themselves and the virus. Examples are: respirators, gloves, surgical masks.

To help you to start a protection program go to the following link for a Business Pandemic checklist: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html>

Additional information is also available from the U.S. Government at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html>

## Electrical Safety

Electrical hazards can cause burns, shocks and electrocution (death).

### Safety Tips

- Assume that all wires are energized at lethal voltages. Never assume that a wire is safe to touch even if it is down or appears to be insulated.
- Never touch a fallen overhead power line. Call the electric utility company to report fallen electrical lines.
- Stay at least 10 feet (3 meters) away from overhead wires during cleanup and other activities. If working at heights or handling long objects, survey the area before starting work for the presence of overhead wires.
- If an overhead wire falls across your vehicle while you are driving, stay inside the vehicle and continue to drive away from the line. If the engine stalls, do not leave your vehicle. Warn people not to touch the vehicle or the wire. Call or ask someone to call the local electric utility company and emergency services.
- Never operate electrical equipment while you are standing in water.
- Never repair electrical cords or equipment unless qualified and authorized.
- Have a qualified electrician inspect electrical equipment that has gotten wet before energizing it.
- If working in damp locations, inspect electric cords and equipment to ensure that they are in good condition and free of defects, and use a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- Always use caution when working near electricity