



**Health and Human Services Department
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Dear Lincoln County Businesses,

Lincoln County Health and Human Services would like to share the attached business continuity information with you should we face a pandemic flu in our nation. In fact, the ideas and recommendations would also be useful for any type of large emergency we could face in Lincoln County (i.e.; severe windstorm, earthquake).

Lincoln County faces the possibility of being cut-off from the valley should a pandemic or large earthquake occur. Resources typically are allocated where the larger population base is. For this reason, having prepared businesses in Lincoln County will greatly help our ability to sustain our residents, and at the same time, help businesses maintain operations.

The goal of the Federal Government's response to pandemic influenza are to limit the spread of a pandemic, mitigate disease, suffering and death, as well as sustain the infrastructure and lessen the impact on the economy and the functioning of society. To stay in business during a time like this, there would be many things you would need to think about. For example:

- Do you have agreements with your suppliers to maintain business during this time?
- What is their emergency plan?
- What are your critical functions and who would perform them?
- Would you be able to pay your employees?
- Do you have updated emergency contact information for all your employees?
- Could you stagger shifts or offer flexible working hours?

These are but a few of the items you will see addressed in the attached information. It is unrealistic to expect that you will be able to prepare for all contingencies that could occur. We cannot prevent the chaos that would naturally occur, but we can do our best to at least decrease it.

An excellent resource for more business continuity planning related to pandemic flu can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov. Go to the "Workplace Planning" link at the top.

As always, feel free to call me if you have additional questions or concerns as you think about how to proceed for your own business.

Sincerely,

Lynn Alexanderson, LCSW, MS
Public Health Emergency Preparedness Planner
541-265-6611 ext. 2461



Every Business Should Have a Plan

Plan to Stay in Business

Any preparation is better than no preparation at all. You don't have to start from scratch. Look at on-line resources. If your company already has emergency response plans in place, modify them for the flu pandemic. If your company doesn't have any emergency preparedness plans in place, now is a good time to develop them. Update your plans regularly to make sure they are still a good fit for your business operations. Let your employees and customers know that in case of a flu pandemic, your company is prepared.

- Check for existing emergency plans. Are plans applicable for pandemic illness?
- Identify critical inputs (raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor for services/products, etc.) required to maintain business operations.
- Identify your company's essential functions and the individuals who perform them.
- Write down processes for critical functions.
- Determine which outside activities are critical to maintaining your operations and develop alternatives in case these activities are reduced, completely interrupted, or no longer working. For example, what transportation systems are needed to provide essential materials? Does the business operate on "just in time" inventory or is there typically some reserve?
- Try to anticipate and plan for an increase or decrease in demand for your products and/or services during an emergency.
- Plan for interruptions of essential governmental services like sanitation, water and power.
- Consider expanding online and self-service options for customers and business partners.
- Plan for an extended disruption of shipping of all items including food.
- Develop alternative practices, like video conferencing, for conducting business if travel of any kind is restricted.
- Establish an emergency communication plan including processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- Review insurance coverage. Check about things such as business interruption and understand what your policy covers and what it does not.
- Work with state and local public health to define when it is appropriate to take steps to contain and prevent the spread of illness (e.g., closing (and re-opening)). State and local public health will help to develop thresholds and guidelines.

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Planning Considerations for Employers

Plan to Stay in Business

Plan ahead for employees! Pandemic flu is potentially very contagious. Businesses will need to take extra precautions to try to protect employees. Many employees will not be able to come to work either due to illness, or because they have to stay home to take care of a sick family member, and/or children due to closures of school or daycare.

- Encourage all of your employees to complete Individual and Family Emergency Response plans. This may present a challenge for employees in low wage positions.
- The absence of employees could seriously impair business continuity. Where possible, cross-train staff to ensure that work can be done in the event of an absentee rate of 25-30 percent.
- Update sick leave and family and medical leave policies and communicate with employees about the importance of staying away from the workplace if they become ill. Concern about lost wages is the largest deterrent to voluntary self-quarantine.
- Ensure that you are able to continue to pay employees in the event of an emergency.
- Where applicable, establish or expand policies and tools that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access to applications.
- Discuss plans for child care with your workforce. Staff are more likely to leave their children and come to work when they are confident that their children are in a safe place.
- Provide resources for your workforce about the threat of pandemic flu and explain the steps your company is taking to prepare for it.
- Develop and implement a workplace infection control policy based on recommendations from state and local public health.
- Keep updated emergency contact information for all your employees.

Challenges to Consider

- Employees with physical disabilities may need help getting food and other essential day to day supplies during a pandemic especially if supplies are limited and local stores are closed.
- Employees with mental disabilities or limited English language skills may have trouble understanding the seriousness of a pandemic and/or how to prepare themselves or follow workplace emergency policies.
- Employees with chronic health conditions may be particularly vulnerable to a pandemic illness and may need to make special arrangements for their safety and health care.
- Develop a system to make sure there are ways to check on employees you know live alone.

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Workplace Infection Control

Try to Stay in Business

How Germs Spread

Illnesses like the flu (influenza) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus is inhaled by another person. Germs are also spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with a virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can live for 2 hours or more on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, telephones and tables.

Individual Infection control

- Promote hand washing and respiratory hygiene (cover your coughs and sneezes).
- Ensure wide and easy availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizer products when soap and water are not available.
- Ensure wide and easy availability of tissues.
- Provide personal protective equipment such as disposable face masks and disposable gloves when necessary.
- Develop policies to deal with the management of ill employees, to include restriction of entry to the workplace and sending ill workers home.

Disinfection and Cleaning Procedures

- Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces and commonly shared items. Where possible, clean between users and at minimum, daily.
- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Always follow label instructions when using any EPA-registered disinfectant. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix ¼ cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.

Social Distancing

- Avoid face-to-face meetings; if unavoidable, maintain a distance of 3 feet between individuals.
- Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, workshops or training.
- Consider setting up staggered shifts or flexible work hours to reduce crowding.

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Communication

Plan to Stay in Business

Communication is critical. In emergencies, employees demonstrate an increased tendency to listen to their employer, so clear and frequent communication is essential.

- Develop and test plans for sharing important information with employees, and their families. Ensure language, culture and reading level appropriateness with communications.
- Ensure that the communication plan for employees explains the steps your business is taking to prepare for pandemic illness.
- Include in the communication plan information about the importance of social distancing (staying at least 3 feet away from anyone who is ill).
- Work with state and local public health to develop appropriate communication messages when it is necessary to take steps to contain and prevent the spread of illness.
- Advise employees to find up-to-date and reliable pandemic illness information from federal, state and local public health sources, which may include daily T.V. and/or radio broadcasts. (www.pandemicflu.gov)
- Anticipate and plan communications to address the potential fear and anxiety of employees, and families that may result from rumors or misinformation.
- Test the provision of back-up communication systems/channels that allow for the expedited transmission and receipt of information (hotlines, telephone trees, dedicated websites, local radio or television).

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