



# Information Bulletin

*California Emergency Management Agency  
Law Enforcement Branch*

*Paul Walters, Acting Chief*

**Updated**

## PREPAREDNESS PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR A POTENTIAL PANDEMIC FLU VIRUS – H1N1 (Swine Flu)

By Robert Gerber, Deputy Chief  
April 29, 2009

*“What makes this so difficult is we may be somewhere between an important but yet still uneventful public health occurrence here — with something that could literally die out over the next couple of weeks and never show up again — or this could be the opening act of a full-fledged influenza pandemic.”*

Dr. Michael Osterholm  
University of Minnesota

### **PREFACE**

This document is an updated version of a previously issued bulletin from the Law Enforcement Branch titled “Preparedness Planning Considerations for Pandemic Flu Virus” dated March 13, 2006. The bulletin can be located and downloaded on the Cal EMA website: [www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov). While the current virus of concern is different from the “bird flu” virus, many of the precautions and law enforcement considerations remain the same. This update will include many of the previous bulletin’s planning considerations in addition to new emerging information and preparedness measures regarding the H1N1 influenza virus. Finally, this bulletin is provided to initiate discussion and foster preparedness at all levels of government. It is not intended to generate undue alarm and apprehension.

### **BACKGROUND**

In recent weeks there has occurred an outbreak of the swine flu or H1N1 virus. This is a new strain of influenza that was first detected in Mexico and is currently spreading around the world including cases here in California. Confirmed cases in Mexico have resulted in over one hundred deaths while other global incidents do not appear to be as fatal. Nonetheless, the World Health Organization (WHO) has raised its “pandemic alert” to level 4. A level 4 warning officially means that the WHO considers that there is “sustained human to human transmission” enough to cause community level outbreaks. Levels 5

and 6 represent “widespread human infection.” The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has activated its emergency operations center to coordinate the agency’s emergency response.

At the time of this bulletin H1N1 human cases in California have risen to 13. The State Department of Public Health has activated its operations center and is working closely with State Emergency Medical Services Authority. The California Emergency Management Agency has activated its State and Regional Operations Centers in support of the Department of Public Health. On March 28, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed a State of Emergency to bolster the state’s response to the H1N1 virus (see reference internet sites below to view the Governor’s proclamation in detail).

Communities throughout California have begun to study the potential impacts of the H1N1 flu outbreak and have initiated plans and procedures to mitigate the effects of a deadly and disruptive flu pandemic should it arise. The occurrence and spread of the flu virus throughout California will present unique challenges and demand extraordinary effort by law enforcement agencies and personnel. Therefore, law enforcement agencies, at all levels of government, are *strongly encouraged* to engage in flu preparedness planning activities in coordination and cooperation with their respective health departments, emergency medical services, emergency management agencies, fire services, and other pertinent organizations.

This updated bulletin has been prepared to assist law enforcement agencies in recognizing the severity and need to prepare for a flu pandemic (whatever virus strain it may be), offer key considerations, and provide notable internet sites for further research and reference.

## **KEY LAW ENFORCEMENT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Public safety agencies in California have extensive experience preparing and responding to a variety of emergencies. Often these events rise to the level of presidential disaster declarations. Furthermore, the advent of domestic terrorism has presented additional preparedness challenges to confront. However, the reality of a major pandemic flu outbreak spreading across our nation and state will present extraordinary circumstances that may be unfamiliar to the law enforcement discipline. As you review the list below consider your agency’s level of service you can provide to your community with the additional responsibilities and missions brought on by a pandemic flu environment.

- ★ Agencies may want to invite their local health department or other appropriate organization(s) to provide an introductory briefing to command staff on the H1N1 swine flu situation and the potential consequences should it elevate to pandemic proportions. A review of existing plans and preparedness guidelines is advisable (see references below).
- ★ Agencies are encouraged to develop partnerships and enhance coordination with other local and state agencies including health departments, emergency management, fire service, coroner/medical examiner, emergency medical services, food/agriculture and volunteer organizations. Consider collaborating with these above mentioned key agencies to establish a “H1N1 Influenza Coordinating Committee” to foster a multi-discipline approach to community pandemic flu preparedness.

- ★ The World Health Organization estimates that an influenza pandemic will affect 30-50% of working adults! Agencies must anticipate and prepare for a reduced workforce due to the impact of the influenza on their own personnel. As an agency your plans should consider a 50% or more absenteeism due to the pandemic flu. Loss of staff to personal and family illness will be inevitable.
- ★ In a case of widespread, protracted pandemic, it is possible that local agencies would be hesitant to release personnel to assist other jurisdictions through the law enforcement mutual aid system. In that eventuality, the OES Law Enforcement Branch would confer with the Regional Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Coordinators and the heads of key state law enforcement agencies. It is possible that state law enforcement assets could be made available to assist local agencies if the traditional mutual aid system cannot fill requests for assistance.
- ★ In order to mitigate the loss of department personnel, agencies should provide individual and family preparedness guidance and information to be self-sustaining during the emergency. The more prepared your employees and their families are, the more you can rely on them when the emergency occurs. (This was an important lesson learned in the recent Hurricane Katrina that struck Louisiana and Mississippi).
- ★ As an essential service, law enforcement personnel may receive top priority in receiving vaccinations against the identified flu virus. Law Enforcement agencies should review with their respective health and medical departments, pandemic flu immunization strategies and plans, and provide prevention and wellness education to employees.
- ★ Disruption of national and community infrastructures including transportation systems may require law enforcement to enforce travel restrictions, protect facilities, and provide essential transportation and escort details.
- ★ The State Department of Public Health is coordinating the deployment of state and federal medical resources to include the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) of medicine and medical supplies. The transportation of these critical supplies includes security escort by the California Highway Patrol to designated locations in the local area. Local Sheriff's Departments and police departments should consult their local health departments to determine their role in providing security once supplies are "handed over" to local authorities.

- ★ Under imposed quarantines law enforcement will be asked to enforce the order in coordination with their public health department and in coordination with adjacent jurisdictions. Discussions of the escalation of force and use of lethal force must take place in advance of the event.
- ★ Continuity of government operations plans should be reviewed or developed to consider the potential impacts of a flu pandemic. Critical functions such as dispatch and patrol operations may be severely impacted requiring alternative solutions and work-arounds.
- ★ Law enforcement agencies responsible for coroner operations may be subject to mass fatality situations in relatively short time frames. A high volume of influenza decedents may be processed from hospital and out-of-hospital locations. Storage and disposition of the dead may overwhelm existing facilities and resources.
- ★ A flu pandemic will most certainly generate emergency laws, ordinances, and regulations. Moreover, agencies should re-familiarize themselves with their authority to take specific actions under a pandemic health emergency.
- ★ Educate and inform your citizens through established volunteer groups, community workshops, departmental internet web site, etc., about the pandemic flu situation while promoting individual/family preparedness.

Please note that these planning considerations are but a few of the many issues and unusual characteristics in preparing and responding to an influenza pandemic. It is recommended that agencies review potential pandemic scenarios and conduct “readiness assessments” based on their ability to respond should their jurisdiction be impacted. It would be also worthwhile to study the consequences of the 1918 pandemic and its catastrophic worldwide, national, and local impact. Many of the planning considerations listed above can be applied to other types of disasters including biological, nuclear, and radiological incidents.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Volumes have already been written concerning past flu outbreaks and the current H1N1 flu situation. Selected below are a few of the internet sites that will inform you regarding the H1N1 swine flu and assist you in planning for a potential flu pandemic. It is recommended your agency conduct further research by using available internet search engines, identify best practices, and collaborate with law enforcement agencies and professional organizations.

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	INTERNET WEB SITE
CA Dept. of Public Health (Includes several excellent internet links)	<a href="http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx">http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx</a>
CA Emergency Medical Services Authority	<a href="http://www.emsa.ca.gov">http://www.emsa.ca.gov</a>
World Health Organization (WHO)	<a href="http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/">http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/</a>
U.S. Health & Human Services (HHS), Pandemic Influenza Plan	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/">http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/</a>
CA Emergency Management Agency	<a href="http://www.oes.ca.gov">http://www.oes.ca.gov</a>
CA Governor Schwarzenegger's Swine Flu-H1N1 Emergency Proclamation	<a href="http://gov.ca.gov/">http://gov.ca.gov/</a>
U.S. one-stop access to pandemic flu information. Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families	<a href="http://www.pandemicflu.gov/planguide/checklist.html">http://www.pandemicflu.gov/planguide/checklist.html</a>
Police Chief Magazine, January 2006 article, "The Pandemic Influenza Plan: Implications for Local Law Enforcement", "Pandemic INFLUENZA and Bird FLU: The State of Delaware and Local Law Enforcement Preparedness" (FEB 2006), "QUARANTINES: The Law Enforcement Role" ( FEB 2006).	<a href="http://www.policechiefmagazine.org">http://www.policechiefmagazine.org</a>

**SUMMARY**

“Because local law enforcement will play such a key role in the event of a pandemic, forward-looking local law enforcement leaders will take steps to prepare their agencies and their communities to respond to the possibly devastating effects of a pandemic event.”

Lee Colwell, author  
 Article in Police Chief Magazine  
 January 2006

The World Health Organization has warned us that if a pandemic flu were to occur we should “prepare for massive social and economic disruption.” As we watch the H1N1 virus activity evolve, we must anticipate and be aggressive in our preparedness considerations. The unusual and uncommon characteristics of a global disease outbreak of this kind demands that law enforcement agencies review their role, authorities, and capability against a backdrop of a potential pandemic flu. Measures should be

taken to establish a resilient workforce by providing the necessary tools and information to better prepare them individually and in their families. Law enforcement agencies can greatly benefit in their preparedness planning by collaborating with their respective health departments, emergency management offices, fire departments, and emergency medical services providers.

The California Emergency Management Agency, Law Enforcement Branch personnel are available to assist your department with direct assistance in mutual aid planning operations, and can assist you in obtaining pandemic-specific planning consultation from the California Department of Public Health and other state agencies. Please contact the Cal EMA Law Enforcement Branch's headquarters office in Sacramento at (916) 845-8700 for your nearest field representative.