



Autumn 2006

In this issue:

- [Groceries and Government Partner to Help Prepare Communities](#)
- [Winter Flu Season](#)
- [Flu Shots Offer Protection Against Seasonal Flu](#)
- [Addressing Special Needs](#)
- [Ohio Plans for Business Continuity](#)
- [Ohio Exercises Communications Plans](#)
- [Web Site Highlights](#)

Newsletters available

- [Business](#)
- [School](#)
- [Community Organization](#)
- [Local Government](#)
- [Combined Newsletter](#)

**Send your best practices to:
Editors**

Moriah Needham
Ohio Department of Health
614-644-8562
*Business
*School

Sara Morman
Ohio Department of Health
614-644-8562
*Community
*Local Government

Article submissions

Do you have an idea for an article? Would you like to submit an article you've already written? Contact the

Be Prepared - Ohio Businesses Plan for Flu Pandemic**Groceries and Government Partner to Help Prepare Communities**

One of the actions Ohioans can take to prepare for emergencies including an influenza pandemic is to stock up on food, water, medicines and emergency supplies. The [Fairfield Department of Health](#) this year dedicated its county fair booth to emergency preparedness. They gave away more than 3,500 preparedness packets and displayed a two-week supply of groceries and supplies, raffling it off to residents who participated in an awareness survey. Kroger stores in Fairfield County donated the goods for the raffle.

Meanwhile, a statewide effort to assist grocers in planning for an influenza pandemic was undertaken by the Ohio Food Industry Foundation (OFIF) in partnership with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). OFIF worked with the food safety team at ODH to author the [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guide for Retail Food Establishments](#), which was [distributed](#) to more than 14,000 retail food establishments.

[Return to Top](#)**Winter Flu Approaches**

With the height of winter flu season approaching, some may wonder about the many differences between seasonal and pandemic flu. Seasonal flu follows predictable patterns usually occurring in the winter; a pandemic can happen at any time during the year and occurs rarely. During the winter flu season, the very young, elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications; during a pandemic healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications.

[Click here](#) for more information on the differences between seasonal and pandemic flu.

[Return to Top](#)**Flu Shot Offers Best Protection Against Seasonal Flu**

There is no pandemic flu at this time, but seasonal flu viruses still pose a threat. A flu shot would not protect you against a new flu virus that may cause an influenza pandemic, but it will help you fight off seasonal flu.

Some people, such as older people, young children and people with certain chronic health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. Nationwide, seasonal flu and its complications cause some 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The best way to protect against seasonal flu is to get a vaccination each fall. The flu shot is a vaccine that provides protection against the flu and is given by needle in the arm. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. The nasal-spray flu vaccine contains attenuated (weakened) live viruses and is administered by nasal sprayer to healthy people aged five to 49 years.

Testing has shown that both the flu shot and the nasal-spray vaccine are effective at preventing the flu.

The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person

editors.

getting the vaccine and the similarity or “match” between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation.

Pandemic flu plans

Want to share your plan with others in Ohio? Contact an editor.

October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. A seasonal flu shot is not effective against a pandemic flu virus, but it may help keep your body stay healthy.

Limiting your exposure to the virus and practicing healthy habits are two ways to protect yourself and loved ones from a flu virus – seasonal or pandemic.

Good health habits include:

Upcoming events

Contact an editor if you would like us to post your upcoming pandemic influenza meeting or event on this Web site.

- Eating a balanced diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products.
- Drinking plenty of water and going easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercising regularly. Thirty or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.
- Getting plenty of rest. Sleep is shown to help your body fight off illness.
- Washing your hands thoroughly and often, especially before eating or cooking. Use soap and water and scrub for 20 seconds.
- Trying not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.
- Staying away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- Staying home from work or school if you are sick if you are sick.



Contact your doctor's office, employer, local health department or a retailer to obtain a flu shot.

[Return to Top](#)

Protecting Special Needs Populations During a Pandemic

During a pandemic, supply chains may break down, access to outpatient medical treatments may be limited and hospitals likely will reach full capacity quickly. For Ohioans with physical, medical or mental disabilities, emergencies present unique challenges. Organizations working with special needs populations should plan now to continue providing supplies and services during a pandemic. Protecting vulnerable special needs populations during a pandemic requires careful planning. [Click here for more information.](#)

[Return to Top](#)

Ohio Plans for Business Continuity

If 40 percent of state employees are home sick or caring for sick family members during an influenza pandemic, how will the State of Ohio function? That's what state agencies are currently planning for.

While continuity of operations plans have been in place at the state for some time, these traditional plans assume state facilities are unavailable. Continuity of operations for a pandemic considers something else, the likely reduction in the number of employees available. Several state agencies recently completed plans outlining their response to an influenza pandemic earlier this year. Now, all state agencies are working together to assure minimum essential functions continue in their respective agencies.

In late March, Governor Bob Taft issued a cabinet advisory asking state agencies to develop continuity of operations plans specific to a pandemic. Once agency plans were reviewed, an executive order was issued in August establishing the Pandemic Influenza State Services Advisory Council (PISSAC).

The council, comprised of representatives from the Governor's and Attorney General's offices and the departments of Administrative Services, Health, Budget and Management and Public Safety, provided additional guidance for state agencies to address in the plans. The overall goal of the pandemic flu continuity of operations plans is to ensure delivery of essential services. State agencies are identifying essential and non-essential roles for employees. Employees not working on essential functions may be designated to act in common support duties to fulfill the state mission.

The PISSAC is responsible for overseeing and coordinating state agency pandemic influenza continuity of operations plans. Plans are currently undergoing a second review and will be revised as needed. In the future, PISSAC will consider what if any legislative changes need to be considered and will begin exercising state agency plans.

[Return to Top](#)

Ohio Exercises Communications Plans

Although public health scientists and researchers are confident a new strain of influenza will one day lead to a pandemic one day, the exact timing and circumstances won't be known until the event is upon us. A proactive effort to share information with the public is part of the foundation of the national strategy. In Ohio, active planning, training and exercises to test those plans have been underway for months.

There are several types of exercises, but most are either "tabletop" or "functional." A tabletop exercise involves participants discussing what action steps are in their plans. Tabletop exercises provide readiness to conduct a functional exercise, in which participants actually perform the activities called for in their plans.



Jay Carey, ODH Director of Public Affairs; Jane Beathard, Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director of Communications; Kristopher Weiss, ODH Public Information Officer and LeeAnne Mizer, Ohio Department of Agriculture Public Information Officer discuss the exercise scenario and make final changes to a sample news release.

For instance, communications plans typically provide reasons for and steps on how to conduct news conferences. In a tabletop exercise, participants would be given a scenario and asked what would or should be done in this circumstance. They would explain and discuss their procedure and thought processes about the need for a news conference. In a functional exercise given the same scenario, participants would go through the preparations of conducting a news conference.

Held Sept. 28, 2006, at the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, one recent functional exercise involved some 50 communications staff from government agencies including the Ohio Department of Health. The scenario for the exercise highlighted the hours surrounding the first public announcement of lab results confirming the dangerous strain of the H5N1 (bird flu) virus in the state.

In this communications exercise, participants were given a highly compressed timeframe to recognize the need for a news conference; prepare for one; and conduct it according to existing guidelines.

Why is this important?

During a crisis, information is crucial - not just for those responding to the emergency but for each resident in the affected area. Sharing accurate and timely information is the key mission of communications professionals, especially during a crisis.

Exercises are one step in a continuing program of training. Following the event, participants provided their observations and feedback. Later, exercise evaluators met to review their observations. Exercises are designed to test particular items in a plan and evaluators provide their feedback as to how well that was accomplished.

Then an after-action report summarizes all observations and comments. This report becomes the basis for corrective actions that may include revising plans; small-scale drills to test one aspect of a response or additional training.

These efforts by communications staff in public health and other response agencies are one part of a larger response in place when an influenza pandemic or other public health emergency occurs.

[Return to Top](#)

Web Site Highlights

If you haven't discovered the [publication library](#) yet, check it out. All publications are listed on this page for download, some with areas you can customize for your employees. All of these documents are public and free for you to use in your business.

A page has been created that offers documents in Spanish and links to sites providing health and pandemic flu information [in Spanish](#).

[Return to Top](#)

[home](#) | [contact webmaster](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [publication library](#)

Files require [Acrobat Reader 7.0](#)
Files require [Windows Media Player 10](#)

PA
ND
EMIC
P
L
ANNING

GET INFORMED

BE PREPARED

WORK TOGETHER