

Risk Management Alert

Swine Flu Virus Preparedness

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PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 

With the increasing media coverage of cases of the swine flu virus around the globe, pandemic planning must remain an active part of your company's business continuity management process. This increased concern regarding the swine flu is leading many companies to take action now to implement their pandemic plans, provide guidance to their employees, and/or refresh themselves on their business priorities in a disaster. Taking such measures now can help to ensure the safety and well-being of employees, their families, and local communities, while decreasing employee stress levels.

Below are some key actions that should currently be undertaken:

- Make decisions about what to do with staff in known hot-zones (e.g., Mexico) and other affected regions if the swine flu continues to spread. Be mindful of issues such as local quarantines, travel restrictions and airline capacity to return home
- Consider having employees who have travelled to affected areas stay at home for prescribed periods of time to determine if they have become infected, allowing the virus to incubate and symptoms emerge. Institute travel restrictions to known hot-zones.
- Proactively educate, build awareness, and communicate across the organization:
 - Remind employees that the company has a plan in place and a team focused on pandemic planning;
 - Clearly communicate guidance and decisions to employees to reduce speculation and rumors. Include information about employee benefits when/if it becomes appropriate (e.g., if people are asked to stay at home will they continue to be paid, will sick leave be extended, etc.); and
 - Provide employees with other sources of data, including emergency contacts if they become ill while travelling and support for employees in affected area.
- Share employee health tips such as:
 - Wash hands regularly with soap or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
 - Dispose of any used tissues in a wastebasket.
 - Avoid crowds and avoid touching another persons' nose, mouth or eyes.
- Revisit functional capabilities and alternate processing strategies in the event of severe employee outages.
 - Look at your last Business Impact Analysis - are the critical functions still the same? If not, what has changed and what areas need to quickly come up to speed with a business continuity plan?
- Consider technological requirements for alternate working arrangements (remote connectivity). If many people need to work at home, consider that internet access may become slow or unavailable for periods of time. Increase the number of technical support personnel assigned to networking and remote access.
- Reach out to key suppliers to understand/confirm their continuity plans and determine if mutual aid is an option if reduced staffing becomes an issue.
- Continue to monitor the health agencies for status updates.

For more information

If you should have any questions about your program, how you might enhance your Pandemic Preparedness and Response Program, or how your existing Business Continuity Management Program can respond during this potential crisis please feel free to contact our Business Continuity Management Team.

Phil Samson
U.S. Business Continuity Management
Leader
(214) 754-7269

Dr. David L. Levy
Global Healthcare Leader
(646) 471-1070

For general Pandemic Preparedness or Business Continuity inquiries, please email grcwebcasts@us.pwc.com

For current status on the swine flu please visit the following websites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- World Health Organization: www.who.int
- US Department of Health and Human Services: www.hhs.gov