



Managing Health and Safety Risks? Don't Underestimate the Flu

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Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough. Wash your hands often. Stay home if you are sick. The standards are all effective when it comes to minimizing the spread of germs and viruses during a typical cold and flu season — if everyone follows them to the letter.

But that's a big "if" — and this is no typical cold and flu season. For months, we've seen the stories and warnings about the dreaded H1N1 virus (sometimes called "swine flu"). How much damage could such a flu really do? The U.S. Health & Human Services' 2005 Pandemic Influenza Plan describes a "worst-case scenario" in which 30% of the U.S. population could become infected, with nearly 10 million hospitalizations and the potential for almost two million deaths.

The experts are quick to acknowledge that there are too many variables for anyone to predict what will happen. But being prepared is clearly the best strategy — especially for businesses. This isn't just a human health issue — it's also about your company's financial health. Think about it — what will happen to your company's productivity, sales, even basic operations if 30% of your workforce is out sick? Or even just 10% or 15%?

Chances are you have already made the flu vaccine available for your workforce in advance. That's a standard "ounce of prevention," but with the stakes raised this year, we should all be thinking about the full pint. What else is your company doing to manage this risk — and what more can you do? For example, are you set up to track vaccination data — and use employee data to better treat those who report early symptoms? PureSafety's Occupational Health Manager® (OHM) solution can help you do that, and much more. OHM offers powerful tools to track and manage employees who are required to get the vaccine or are exposed to an illness, as well as schedule booster vaccines in user-defined intervals. Plus, OHM lets you enter batch vaccinations all at once, eliminating manual entry on multiple patients while ensuring each dose is logged with the correct batch and lot numbers.

Prevention is also a corporate culture issue. When there's organization-wide awareness of safety and health risks and their impact, employees are more likely to remember and adhere to appropriate precautions. Training, such as PureSafety's online course on Pandemic Influenza, can clear up misperceptions about what a pandemic is, ensure employee awareness of the seriousness of H1N1, and provide valuable information about how to minimize the spread of viruses. PureSafety's course can also be supplemented with any number of your company-specific protocols. User interactivity throughout the course aids retention, and a test at the end helps you ensure that the course was not only completed but understood.

A threat like the H1N1 virus often inspires both great pessimism ("we're doomed!") and great optimism ("there's nothing to worry about!"). At PureSafety, we believe realism is always the best perspective. We don't like sensationalism, and we don't use it to sell our solutions. But, being born out of a workplace tragedy, and having served professionals like you for over a decade, we also know that optimism is never as effective as monitoring every realistic threat and doing all you can to avert it. That's why we are committed to leveraging the full power of technology to help you do more (in less time and with less total cost) to protect both your business and the individuals who make up your business. Let's do all we can to make H1N1 a non-event this year.