

Pandemic Flu Policy & Contingency Plan For Businesses



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Foreword

What steps should companies take to reduce the impact of Swine Flu on their business?

At Byotrol, we're believers that really effective and swift action can act to prevent a pandemic in the same way that the rapid extinguishing of a small blaze can prevent a forest fire.

The stakes are high (enormous) both in human and in business costs. This is why we've prepared this guide for business owners about what to do in the event of a pandemic.

All of my team are very sensitive about the seriousness of the situation and we have a real sense that we can make a difference even if, and I hope it is, the current alarm turns out to be an epidemic that never fully took hold.

The behaviour of taking hand hygiene seriously without developing an obsessive-compulsive disorder is a good life habit, whether it is protecting against Swine Flu, or as part of your daily hand hygiene routine.

By taking a few simple proactive steps we can all safeguard our own health and reduce the spread of diseases.

Stephen Falder, Inventor, Byotrol

I. Introduction - what should businesses do?

A Swine Flu (influenza) pandemic has the potential to severely affect UK business, its employees and their families.

Safeguarding against this requires specific planning so that business owners can protect their operations and the health of their employees. We recommend that business owners draw up plans to focus on:

1. Raising employees' awareness of the threat of a pandemic and testing their preparedness – without giving rise to panic
2. Maintaining health surveillance and hygiene measures
3. Producing action plans that are specific to each of the business's locations, taking into account local healthcare provision and regulatory systems governing drug licensing and stockpiling
4. Enhanced protection for high risk and vulnerable employees

2. Background

Pandemic influenza (flu) is a type of influenza that occurs every few decades and which spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world.

Unlike the “ordinary” flu that occurs every winter in the UK, pandemic flu can occur at any time of year.

Pandemic flu is much more serious than “ordinary” flu. As much as a quarter of the population may be affected - maybe more.

Pandemic flu is likely to cause the same symptoms as ordinary flu but the symptoms may be more severe because nobody will have any immunity or protection against the particular virus.

Swine influenza or “Swine Flu” is a contagious disease caused by mutation in influenza A viruses.

Bird flu was believed to infect people rarely, and even then to only cause mild disease, until 1997 when the highly pathogenic Avian flu virus, A/H5N1, infected 18 people in Hong Kong, killing six of them.

3. Planning for a PANDEMIC

The CEO (or where appropriate, other senior manager) should be the business's designated pandemic co-ordinator and pandemic response team from across the business should be set up and trained

The functions of the pandemic response team includes

- Maintaining the team's own awareness of global developments in Swine Flu (including guidance on containment strategies and vaccines). An easy way to do this is to set up a series of online subscriptions and alerts via a service such as Google News
- Developing training and awareness materials for the business
- Briefing the Board of Management
- Ensuring links are maintained with external stakeholders in planning for a pandemic flu (e.g. suppliers, customers and depending on the business - the Public)

4. Working practices and social distancing. What to do if Swine Flu hits your business

1. Employees will be required to work at least one metre away from colleagues to ensure social distancing and managers should reconfigure work-site layouts to enable this to take place
2. Other social distancing responses are likely to include:
 - Absolutely no shared use of telephones and mobiles
 - Advising employees to avoid face-to-face meetings and to use telephone and internet services instead, where possible
 - If this is not possible, meeting only in a large room and maintaining a distance of at least one metre between participants
 - Advising employees to avoid crowded places (lifts) or heavily populated gatherings (e.g. sporting events)
 - Advising employees to avoid travelling at busy periods on public transport
3. Essential workers who are totally reliant on public transport may be offered dedicated transport to and from work
4. Employees who are fit to return to work following an absence due to pandemic flu (and who have therefore developed immunity to the disease) might be considered for high-risk, essential roles within the business
5. The company should establish flexible working policies, enabling line managers to agree home-working, different shift patterns, or relocation to a site more local to the employee's home where appropriate

5 - Infection Control

1. During a pandemic, employers can assist in reducing the overall and specific risks to members of staff by taking appropriate infection control actions (e.g. strengthening guidance on hand washing, unnecessary contact such as hand shaking and isolation of any member of staff with symptoms such as coughing)
2. Basic health protection advice should include the following guidance:
 - Avoiding close contact with other people
 - Staying at home when sick or sickening
 - Covering mouth and nose completely with disposable tissues when sneezing and coughing; sanitising hands immediately afterwards
 - Cleaning hands regularly
 - Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth
3. Additional protection measures should be taken to ensure that influenza does not spread through contaminated objects and surfaces such as handles, railings and counters. Surfaces touched by hands should be cleaned at least daily using antimicrobial products such as Byotrol.
4. Staff with flu-like symptoms should be required to stay at home until the symptoms disappear and be allowed in the workplace only in extreme circumstances
5. Staff developing symptoms at work should be accommodated in a designated isolation room while arrangements are made to transport them home. Precautions should be introduced for all those entering and leaving this room
6. Staff at risk of developing influenza-related complications (e.g. pregnant workers and those with compromised immune systems) should be reassigned from high-risk work sites and locations in the event of a pandemic

6. Business and personal travel

1. The pandemic response team should monitor travel plans and introduce new procedures for notifying employees' of pandemic outbreaks during periods of business travel.
2. Only essential business travel should be considered during a pandemic and procedures for approving travel need to be tightened, requiring authorisation from a senior manager
3. Staff required to visit pandemic-affected areas on business should be provided with appropriate health advice and personal protective equipment (e.g. face masks, Byotrol based hand sanitisers and surface wipes) and employees should have the right to refuse to travel to such areas.
4. Staff visiting affected areas for non-business purposes during a pandemic may need to be required to stay away from work for a period of quarantine.

7. Core Business functions in the event of a pandemic

Goods services and functions of the business that are essential to its operations and survival should be defined so the business can

1. Carry out devolution planning: i.e. plan which services can be carried out by other sites
2. Develop an order of succession: plan which services can be carried out by personnel, other than those who are normally given the task, and train non-essential back-up staff to perform essential tasks
3. Stockpile small quantities of essential supplies, materials and equipment
4. Ensure that maintenance plans are up to date to guarantee that all equipment essential to the business's operation is capable of sustained operation in the event of a pandemic
5. Prepare timelines for how long it will be possible for the business to carry out its essential functions without critical supplies, personnel and equipment
6. Produce forecasts of employee sickness absence during a pandemic flu
7. Put in place policies to enable flexible working (e.g. home-working) in the event of a pandemic flu
8. Put in place a pandemic response team that will take steps to heighten awareness of the business's infection control procedures, particularly provisions covering hand hygiene
9. Provide specific hygiene training for all employees
10. Prepare employee support services, including grief counselling and psychiatric care
11. Ensure that adequate supplies of infection control materials (Byotrol mousse for hand hygiene, surface sprays, wipes, gloves and masks) are held in preparation for a pandemic

About Byotrol

Byotrol is a new, revolutionary anti-microbial technology that helps in the fight against pandemics such as Swine Flu. Byotrol is already being used by the NHS with outstanding results having been proven to be successful in ridding hospitals of deadly superbugs, it does so through prevention and protection.

Unlike other anti-microbial agents, Byotrol keeps working once it has been applied, meaning that surfaces – as well as the human skin – remain germ free. And though it's deadly to microbes, it's gentle for both humans and animals.

For further information, see <http://www.byotrol.co.uk>