

Preparing for a Flu Pandemic: AH&LA's Tips for Hotels

(sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC)

Here are some basic elements that should be included in pandemics plan for businesses: (click here for the complete [CDC/HHS Business Pandemic Planning Checklist](#))

1. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your business.
 2. Plan for the impact of a pandemic on your employees and customers
 3. Establish policies to be implemented during a pandemic—including procedures for handling sick employees
 4. Allocate resources to protect your employees and customers during a pandemic
 5. Communicate to and educate your employees
 6. Coordinate with external organizations and help your community
- **Restrictions on public gatherings:** The President's Implementation Plan calls for local, community-wide measures such as suspension of public gatherings, which may affect events at your property. Be prepared to inform your customers immediately of any events that need to be canceled.
 - **Absenteeism:** The federal government advises businesses to plan for up to 40 percent of employees staying home for two weeks at the height of a pandemic, with lower levels of absenteeism for a few weeks on either side of the peak. Develop a method for determining when to send employees home, as well as procedures for handling the tasks normally done by workers who have become ill.
 - **Infected Areas:** In the event that one of your guests or employees shows signs of being infected with avian flu (symptoms include: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, eye infections, pneumonia, and severe respiratory diseases), you will also need a plan for cleaning and handling rooms, restaurants and other areas that have been used by the infected person.
 - **Hotels as quarantine sites:** Some authorities have suggested that hotels may be used as quarantine sites. If that happens, outline steps you can take now to feed and house employees and guests that are required to stay at the hotel.
 - **Consider these other possibilities:** sick employees who refuse to stay home, supplier disruptions, and travel restrictions resulting in substantial cancellations.
 - **Public communications:** If a pandemic occurs, hotels should inform the community and local media of action being taken to blunt the impact of a pandemic. Timely, accurate and clear communication is the key to

keeping fear and panic at a minimum and also to limiting the affect on your business. Click here to read **AH&LA's Pandemic Crisis Communications Checklist**.

- **Accurate contact lists:** Any plan must include accurate lists of key agencies that should be contacted if a guest is suspected of having avian flu, as well as contacts who can provide accurate and timely local information. Click here for a complete list of [state public health, agriculture and wildlife contacts](#).

Stay connected:

- Learn about [state pandemic plans](#).
- Become familiar with the many resources available on the government's official pandemic website: www.pandemicflu.gov.
- Check www.ahla.com/flu for updates, seminars, and new materials.
- Check travel advisories frequently at: www.cdc.gov/travel.
- Listen to local and national radio.
- Watch news reports on television.
- Establish contact with local health care providers and public health officials