

Use this checklist, along with your Business Continuity Plan to prepare your business for an influenza pandemic.

A pandemic is an epidemic of infectious disease that spreads through human populations across a large region. While there are many potential infectious disease threats, an influenza pandemic poses the most significant risk, therefore this checklist focusses on preparing for an influenza pandemic.

Unlike other natural disasters, an influenza pandemic would build up over a number of weeks, could last for 7–10 months and would affect whole populations, with potentially high levels of illness, deaths and social and economic disruption.

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges against which there is no vaccine or population immunity. Based on assumptions outlined in the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza 2014 (AHMPPI) and assuming appropriate medical care is available, Tasmania can expect between 180 and 2 254 deaths from an influenza pandemic over seven to 10 months, with most deaths occurring in under five-year-olds, over 65-year olds and 20–35 year-olds. Up to 20 per cent of the workforce could be away from work on any given day during the peak of illness. Use this checklist to prepare your business in advance and take action to reduce potential impacts from an influenza pandemic.

General

- ☐ Consider the risk of influenza pandemic to your business. Likely impacts include staff absenteeism and disruptions to supply chains, services and resources that your business relies on. For further information on influenza pandemic, see the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website's communicable diseases prevention page www.dhhs.tas.gov.au
- ☐ Include risk mitigation strategies for influenza in your Business Continuity Plan, including strategies to mitigate the financial impacts from ongoing reduced consumer spending and investment confidence during pandemic. A Business Continuity Plan template is available from www.business.tas.gov.au
- ☐ Consider your insurance needs in relation to pandemic (for example, loss of income) and make sure your chosen policy provides an appropriate level of cover for your business and that you understand any requirements.
- ☐ Familiarise yourself with the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza from www.health.gov.au and Tasmanian Pandemic Plans from www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

Infrastructure and property

- ☐ Consider holding a six-week supply of hand hygiene products (including alcohol-based hand gel), tissues and no-touch rubbish bins for staff and client/customer use during a pandemic.
- ☐ Consider purchasing a six-week supply of face masks for use during a pandemic by staff who may have ongoing close contact (within a metre) with people at work, in line with advice provided in the 2014 AHMPPI (note, education on the appropriate use of face masks is essential to avoid unintended negative consequences).
- ☐ Consider purchasing and maintaining technology and equipment (for example, laptops, mobile phones, video-conferencing equipment) to support flexible and alternative work arrangements during a pandemic where feasible.

Staff and business visitors

- ☐ Ensure your staff and guests are aware of pandemic procedures and their roles, including knowing the trigger for pandemic plans and how this information will be communicated.
- ☐ Ensure your staff and guests know where to access official sources of information during a pandemic (for example, TasALERT website www.tasalert.tas.gov.au and social media, Department of Health and Human Services website www.dhhs.tas.gov.au and listening to the emergency broadcaster, ABC local radio). Advice is likely to change quickly, especially in the early days as information about the new virus and how it behaves becomes available.
- ☐ Consider how you would communicate information to staff and guests or customers in the event of a pandemic (for example, bulletins, meetings, notice board, or social media).
- ☐ Ensure a list of emergency and staff contact numbers is available to all staff.
- ☐ Ensure you have an appropriate number of staff trained in first aid and that the contents of your first aid kit are regularly checked and restocked. Further information about first aid requirements is available from WorkSafe Tasmania www.worksafe.tas.gov.au
- ☐ Encourage staff to get immunised against seasonal influenza each year, to reduce the overall burden of influenza on the community, the workplace and health services.
- ☐ Identify ways to support staff health and wellbeing during a pandemic; this may include providing access to counselling services and supporting employees who are ill or in home quarantine during a pandemic.
- ☐ If you have staff who may be at higher risk of severe illness from influenza and who have ongoing close contact (within a metre) with clients at work, consider assigning alternative duties for the duration of an influenza pandemic.
- ☐ Reconsider the need for staff to provide medical certificates to access paid sick leave during a pandemic. There will be high demand for doctors' appointments during a pandemic and GP clinics will also be affected by staff absenteeism.
- ☐ Consider what effects unusually high rates of absenteeism could have on your business over an extended number of months, and determine minimum staffing levels needed to maintain normal service delivery or production levels.
- ☐ Minimise key person dependency. Identify key positions and responsibilities and ensure there are staff trained to cover these roles as necessary. Maintain step-by-step guides for essential processes and procedures. Your business Continuity Plan will help you with this.

In the event of an influenza pandemic, keep yourself, your staff and guests updated by checking the TasALERT website www.alert.tas.gov.au The public health response to pandemic involves international agencies such as the World Health Organisation with the Commonwealth Department of Health and the Tasmanian Government's Department of Health and Human Services.

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