Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan

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Introduction
Continuity means ensuring that essential functions can survive a natural disaster, technological failure, human error, or other disruption. Many continuity plans anticipate disruptions such as fires, earthquakes, and floods; these events are restricted to certain geographic areas, and the time frames are fairly well defined and limited. Pandemic flu, however, demands a different set of continuity assumptions since it will be widely dispersed geographically and potentially arrives in waves that could last several months at a time.

Depending on the flu strain and based on previous pandemics, public health officials project cumulative absentee rates of 25-30 percent over three to four months. Absentees will include sick employees and those who must care for others who are sick. Fear will also impact rates of absenteeism.

If a pandemic flu strikes, government health officials will issue information, warnings and work with the media to disseminate advice on how to avoid becoming ill. Company managers, human resource departments, and employees should pay close attention to the guidance provided by local and state health departments.

In a worse case scenario, “business as usual” may cease. We may have to implement dramatic measures, including shutting down certain departments or areas that have physical interaction with the public. We may also have to restrict travel, cancel group meetings and take steps to minimize the amount of personnel covering certain areas of operation.

Our continuity plans for a pandemic should include the following components at a minimum:

- Provide each employee the resources to prepare themselves and their families
- Prevent/minimize the spread of influenza in the workplace.
- Monitor employee absentee rates
- Create a system to notify/share the information with employees and customers during pandemic
- Develop a plan to address essential resources to maintain minimal operations

Assumptions
A pandemic flu will spread rapidly and easily from person to person, affecting all operations due to absenteeism. Operations that are relied upon by other areas of operation will be facing the same massive absentee rates, and may be unable to provide essential components to maintain the daily operations.

Risk assessments to identify the essential/critical components of our operation need to be conducted. Develop partnerships, alliances, third parties and suppliers to support continuity arrangements that will maintain operations and ensure these components are available during a pandemic.

Recognize in the impact assessment that the possible pandemic includes for example:

- Healthcare services not being available.
- Schools, churches and other public places not being open.
- Borders are partially or fully closed, especially airports, leaving people (our families, employees, customers and suppliers) “stranded”.
- Essential materials and supplies may be limited due to distribution chains that are affected by the travel restrictions or absentee workers supporting those transportation means.
- Essential services around utilities, food distribution/access and banking systems may not be at “normal levels”; access to cash flow could be tight.
- People may not be willing to or able to come to work.

Communications
Communications during a Pandemic involves both internal communications and external communications. Developing a separate communication annex is often useful so that all communications documentation is readily available for supporting updates, advisories, and alerts.

Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Advisory: provides key information for a specific incident or situation; might not require immediate action.
Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Internal & External Communications
• Notification to employees and customers of operational changes
• Provide frequent updates about the pandemic status
• Provide advisories and alerts as conditions change
• Ensure customers, vendors and suppliers have available a dedicated communications contact
• Monitor local, state, and federal pandemic updates

Using phone systems that can perform automatic dialing from a database with each employees contact number is useful to send notifications and messages about alerts. Many phone systems have the capacity to create a message center for staff to call-in and receive important updates. Computer systems have many options available for alerting and notifying key stakeholders through e-mails, pagers, etc. The use of the Company web-site could serve as a portal for sharing information with employees, customers and vendors.

Managing During a Pandemic
During an emergency, employees look to management to provide leadership. Operations that don’t have emergency plans often struggle with the chain of command because Management has not had an opportunity to think through the effects of a crisis. Our operation needs to demonstrate to the employees and customers that Management has a plan and are able to work together.

During a pandemic, key management and supervisors may be out sick or are home taking care of ill family. A plan should include redundancy for the specific measures identified as part of the response plan and those additional responsibilities need to be designated in the management structure.

Many large organizations have well developed disaster plans that mirror the Federal governments National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS is an emergency management tool that relies on a flexible structure. Below is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMAND STAFF:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incident Commander (Superintendent)</td>
<td>Organizes and directs all aspects of the incident response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information Officer (Media/Public Relations)</td>
<td>Creates and releases all information to the media and the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison Officer (Assistant Superintendent)</td>
<td>Establishes and maintains relationships with outside organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Officer (Safety Manager)</td>
<td>Ensures the safety of all persons involved with the pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPERATIONS SECTION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operations Section Chief</td>
<td>Initiates and manages ongoing operations throughout a pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<th>LOGISTICS SECTION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistics Section Chief (Purchasing/Inventory Manager)</td>
<td>Meets the goods, services, and staffing needs of the operation during the pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<th>PLANNING SECTION:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Section Chief</td>
<td>Collects information and resources potentially relevant to the pandemic and operations</td>
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<th>FINANCE SECTION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance Section Chief (Purchasing/Accounting Manager)</td>
<td>Monitors all expenditures and ensures fiscal resource availability during the pandemic</td>
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</table>

However we decide to structure during an emergency, share this with employees and customers so that they will have a clear understanding of who has the responsibility for various functions. Once employees and customers are aware of
this and know we have a plan, their fears will be greatly reduced and will be more likely to support our Operation in an 
emergency.

**Pandemic Response by Pandemic Phase**
Currently the World Health Organization (WHO) has created various phases for a pandemic. We may choose to convert 
the WHO phase system into levels of response to simplify the notifications to employees. Your plan would then include 
specific local indicators for changing the level of response. Response plans for each phase can be defined and outlined 
as in the following tables with specific duties.

Level 0 (WHO Phase 3) - Novel virus alert- not human-to-human transmission 
Level 1 (WHO Phase 4) - Confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission of novel flu virus. 
Level 2 (WHO Phase 5) - Suspected/confirmed cases in your local area. 
Level 3 (WHO Phase 6) - Numerous suspected/confirmed cases in your local area.

Resources for Pandemic Phases: 

**Monitoring & Reporting**
Monitoring absenteeism and identifying the number of ill employees will provide useful information regarding 
operational decisions that need to be made during all phases of a pandemic. For this reason, developing a monitoring 
and reporting system will be essential for continuity of operations.

- Each location should designate a staff person to be the Influenza Manager. This person would be responsible 
  for tracking the employees who call in sick or get ill at work. Weekly or daily reports would be provided to 
  upper management for determining policy issues that may need to be implemented. 
- Pandemic reporting will be developed during the alert phases to identify companywide clusters. Self reporting 
  forms may be made available on-line, and provided to all locations

Information generated through this type of integrated surveillance program will be used to: determine when a pandemic 
begins, track its course nationally, regionally, and locally; and evaluate management efforts.

**Public Health Measures**
Access to vaccines and antiviral drugs during a pandemic will be extremely limited, non-medical interventions may be 
the only way to delay the spread of the disease. Many of the interventions, however, may affect human behavior and 
human rights and therefore need a strong educational and legal basis. Moreover, most of the interventions are based on 
limited evidence. Therefore, transparent decision-making and frank information-sharing should go hand-in-hand with 
the measures discussed in this section.

The key to make public health measures effective, involves providing information to staff on the threat of a pandemic, 
limitations of resources to combat the disease, and educational awareness of the measures that need to be implemented 
before a pandemic begins. These efforts are intended to modify behavior so that utilizing these measures will be 
effective.

Examples of public health measures include;
- Utilize good hygiene by following recommended protection and infection control measures 
- Minimize exposure by avoiding public gatherings, public places, and areas considered high risk 
- Update vaccinations including seasonal flu and pneumonia 
- Keep physically healthy; eat right, drink plenty of fluids, exercise, and get plenty of sleep 
- Maintain a positive mental attitude 
- Stay home and seek medical care when sick

Utilize experts from the field of public health and emergency management to resolve questions about the plans. At a 
minimum, create signage to place in all operations for employees recommending good hygiene measures.
Infection Control Measures
Guidelines for infection control are important to clarify the routes of transmission and the ways to interrupt transmission through measures of hygiene. Infection control is an essential component of pandemic management and a component of public health measures. Utilize training sessions, and signage to make employees aware of the essential measures.

Examples of Infection Control Measures;

1. Stay at home when you are sick. If possible, stay away from work and from running errands. You will help others from catching your illness.
2. Cover your coughs and sneeze into tissue, or cough into your shirt sleeve.
3. Wash your hands often to avoid spreading and getting germs.
4. Enhance existing housekeeping service by wiping down and disinfecting work areas (i.e. keyboards, telephones, desks, doorknobs, etc.) frequently.
5. Enhance housekeeping services for general public use areas several times throughout the work period.
6. Use personal protective equipment where appropriate to minimize exposure (i.e. gloves- handling money, masks- for ill employees)

Maintaining Essential Services
Utilize the risk assessment to identify the critical components to maintaining your operation. Prioritize these components (services and materials) and begin identifying provisions to support those components during an emergency.

The assessment of critical operations needs to include supplies and human resources. Identify the essential staff necessary to continue operations in emergency situations (4 to 6 weeks). Develop a method to cross-train or back-fill these essential employees should the impact of absenteeism during a pandemic minimize worker availability. Look for creative solutions to operational needs such as, creating partnerships with vendors, suppliers, personnel management agencies, and other Terminal operations, in developing a robust plan. The key to maintaining essential services is to identify the critical components that may become scarce during a pandemic. By identifying these early, you can begin looking for ways to create back-up systems, supplies, and other resources.