

SWINE FLU UPDATE

Department of Homeland Security

Updated 4/27/09 at 17:50 p.m.

On Sunday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency related to the outbreak of swine flu in Mexico and the cases reported in the United States.

This is a precautionary tool that the federal government uses often to make sure that we have the resources we need for a developing situation.

This declaration will allow for resources to be provided for federal, state and local agencies to prevent and mitigate this disease as well as the expanded use of medication and diagnostic tests.

We also announced that we have 50 million treatment courses of antiviral drugs (Tamiflu and Relenza) in the Strategic National Stockpile, and that we are releasing 25 percent of those courses, making them available to all states, but prioritizing the affected states.

Seven million treatment courses of Tamiflu have been procured and strategically positioned by the U.S. Department of Defense.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is heavily involved in monitoring and testing to make sure there is no issue with our food supply. So far, no incidents have been reported. Swine flu cannot be contracted by eating pork.

DHS continues its two-fold focus: ensuring the integrity of the border and other ports of entry, and protecting our workforce.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is pre-positioning resources for every duty station and each employee, including Personal Protective Equipment, Meals Ready to Eat, water, on-hand medications and fuel.

CBP has also implemented passive surveillance protocols to screen for ill individuals that may arrive at our borders. All persons entering the United States from a location with reported human infection of swine flu will be processed through all appropriate CBP protocols.

Travelers presenting symptoms, if and when encountered, will be isolated per our established protocols. CBP will provide Personal Protective Equipment for suspected infected travelers.

If and when a situational need develops, all CBP sites can implement procedures for the arrival and deployment of additional personnel to support operations.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has instituted similar protocols at airports, passively looking for those exhibiting flu-like symptoms and taking the appropriate measures.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has pre-positioned millions of masks for its law enforcement and mission-critical personnel throughout the United States. In addition, 15 mobile trailers with emergency supplies have been pre-staged at various ICE field offices.

Currently, ICE has no confirmed cases within the detainee population. All ICE detention facilities have a plan addressing the management of infectious and communicable diseases, which includes coordination with public health authorities.

Individuals should take responsibility for their own health by following these steps to prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.
- If you get sick with influenza, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

Additional Updates:

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director John Berry distributed a memo on April 26 to federal employees providing advice for limiting the spread of flu viruses as a result of the current outbreak.

The Department of State, at the advice of health officials at the CDC, announced a travel advisory recommending citizens avoid all non-essential travel to Mexico. The travel advisory will remain in effect until public health officials determine the risk from the outbreak has subsided.

The U.S. Government has been actively and aggressively responding to the swine flu outbreak over the past several days. The World Health Organization's (W.H.O.) recent decision to raise the pandemic alert level is a response to the ongoing outbreak for which we have already been taking action to mitigate.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu/