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Flu: Incorporating Pandemic Situations in Business Continuity Plans

No one is able to predict if the upcoming seasonal flu will severely restrict operations. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) tracks the number of cases being reported, and there are significant resources being dedicated to limiting the transfer of the virus. It is important that a business examine the impact of an influenza pandemic on operations and align planning efforts to leverage existing crisis management plans. This handout is designed for business leaders to examine and establish alternatives to navigate the flu season.

The checklist that follows is designed to provide businesses with a review of strategies designed to respond to two levels of severity. Public health officials will monitor local conditions, and this will influence a business owner's ability to operate in a crisis mode. Taking time now to review or establish plans should prepare the company for increased numbers of employee absences and plans for essential business functions to continue.

Additional resource planning tools for business continuity operations are available from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/resources-documents/collections/343>.

	YES	NO	N/A
Do existing crisis management and emergency plans include planning for pandemic flu?			
Are emergency measures outlined to assure continuation of critical functions?			
Has a threshold been identified for when to implement certain emergency measures?			
Is the emergency plan reviewed periodically to make sure that all key personnel are familiar with the plan and able to execute the steps?			
Is the plan updated when changes in business require modification and to protect key revenue and service activities?			
Have critical supplies been identified, and are they properly secured?			

	YES	NO	N/A
Is there a centralized emergency communications plan that is communicated to all employees?			
Are employees educated about preventing the spread of the flu?			
Do workers know what to do when they or a family member are stricken with the flu?			
Do employees have access to credible sources, such as the CDC or www.flu.gov , so that they can stay informed about the various flu updates?			
Is there communication with the local health department?			
Are messages simple and designed to communicate information in a way that all workers understand (addressing cultural barriers, visual etc.)?			
Has the possibility of providing alternative work arrangements been examined?			
Has there been consideration of development of a system-wide internet portal with secure remote access?			
If so, has the portal been tested for function and to determine how many users the portal can accommodate safely?			
If workers will be working remotely using a virtual private network (VPN), has the VPN been tested to assure it can manage the anticipated needs?			
Since information technology (IT) may be limited due to system demand, has IT considered how they will prioritize user activity?			
Has the workplace been evaluated to provide social distancing or alternative work arrangements for employees who may be at higher risk to influenza?			
Have contingency plans to cancel non-essential travel been prepared?			
Is someone responsible for reviewing timely and accurate information used to trigger the various threat level actions?			
Are plans in place to communicate emergency plans to the staff?			
Is there a list of prioritized key customers who will receive products or services?			
Has leadership met with key suppliers to find out what types of contingency plans they might have in place?			
Have essential and nonessential operation functions been identified?			
Have staffing shortages been contemplated, and are there plans to reallocate employees as needed?			
Has the idea of developing " quick cards " outlining key activities by position, to be used by a substitute employee, been evaluated?			
If so, has the alternate staff tested the process to ensure that the " quick cards " accurately reflect the core activities?			
Is there a plan to shift workers to home or other sites if the threat of pandemic flu escalates?			

	YES	NO	N/A
Has there been consideration of the impact of disruption in the local community on the organization (for example, transportation, travel, sanitation, etc.)?			
Are there plans to address the possibility of school dismissal or temporary closure of child care?			
Considering that employers may be tracking and monitoring worker health and changing work environments, have the appropriate legal implications been evaluated?			
Have various approaches been evaluated to assure that contractual obligations are met?			

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