



Department Advisory No. 04
Series of 2009

**GUIDELINES ON INFLUENZA A (H₁N₁) PREVENTION
AND CONTROL AT THE WORKPLACE**

In view of the overall efforts to prevent the transmission or spread of Influenza A (H₁N₁) at the workplace, the following Guidelines pursuant to Department Order No. 47-03 are hereby adopted.

I. COVERAGE

These Guidelines shall apply to all employers and workers in the private sector.

II. WORKPLACE HEALTH

As a precautionary measure at the workplace, all employers are enjoined to:

1. Regularly provide information about Influenza A (H₁N₁) including its transmission, disease outcome, and treatment options to their workers;
2. Regularly clean the work areas with household disinfectant and make sure that water, soap and disinfectants are available in all washrooms and toilets;
3. Stress to all workers the **EVERYDAY ACTIONS TO STAY HEALTHY AND KEEP A HEALTHY WORKPLACE**, such as:
 - To cover the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing;
 - Frequent washing of hands with soap and water or cleansing of hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
 - Spitting at proper places;
 - To avoid close contact with sick people;
 - To increase the body's resistance by having adequate rest and at least 8 hours of sleep;
 - Drinking plenty of fluids; and
 - Eating nutritious food.
4. Monitor the health of workers particularly those with fever and those who have traveled to countries affected with the Influenza A (H₁N₁) virus.

Workplace with Imminent Danger Situation

In workplaces where workers are evidently at risk of infection as in health-care services

and other frontline services, the employer shall take immediate protective measures to avoid, correct or remove such imminent danger (based on Rule 1010, OSHS). A screening program on Influenza A (H₁N₁) must be installed in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Health (DOH). Screening or triage shall follow a procedure using a checklist that may include questions related to:

1. Recent travel to a country or place on WHO list with transmission of Influenza A (H₁N₁) virus;
2. Recent contact with a confirmed or suspected Influenza A (H₁N₁) case; and
3. Affliction by such symptoms as fever > 38 degrees Celsius and flu-like symptoms such as cough, difficulty of breathing or shortness of breath; vomiting or nausea; and diarrhea

Workers in said workplace must take extra precautionary measures which includes strict hygiene and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). Employers shall see to it that these PPEs (e.g. appropriate respirators such as N95, gowns, gloves) are properly worn by the workers while at work and disposed of accordingly after use.

Guidance to Employers for Care of Workers with Fever or Who Are Ill:

- A. In the event that a worker is ***SUSPECTED*** as having Influenza A (H₁N₁), the **employer** shall:
 1. Provide the worker with a face mask to prevent the risk of spreading the infection;
 2. Immediately isolate the worker in a separate well-ventilated room in the workplace, away from other workers;
 3. Refer the worker to the company healthcare provider or to the nearest available healthcare provider for evaluation if the history, signs and symptoms are consistent with a suspected case of Influenza A (H₁N₁);
 4. Through the healthcare provider, report the worker suspected to have Influenza A (H₁N₁) to the Department of Health by calling the DOH Hotline on Influenza A (H₁N₁) at telephone numbers: 7111001 / 7111002;
 5. Ensure the implementation of recommendations provided by the DOH Response Team on the management and transport of suspected case of Influenza A (H₁N₁); and
 6. Decontaminate the work area with appropriate disinfectant (e.g. chlorine bleaching solution and 1:100 phenol based disinfectant).

B. In the event that a worker is ill or has fever but is *NOT* suspected to have Influenza A (H₁N₁), the employer must advise the worker to take prudent measures to limit the spread of communicable diseases, including influenza, which are as follows:

1. Stay at home and keep away from work or crowds;
2. Take adequate rest and take plenty of fluids;
3. Practice personal hygiene to prevent spread of the disease; and
4. Seek appropriate medical care if there is persistent fever, when difficulty of breathing has started, or when he becomes weak.

III. LEAVE OF ABSENCE/ENTITLEMENTS

Leave of Absence

For workers who are requested by their employers to stay at home or who are served quarantine order for reasons related to Influenza A (H₁N₁), the following arrangements may be considered during the period of absence:

1. Worker's leave of absence may be charged to their annual sick/vacation leave credits under the company policy or practice or as stipulated in their collective bargaining agreement. If the worker's leave credits have been used up, employers could consider granting leave of absence without pay. However, employers are encouraged to exercise flexibility and compassion in granting additional leave with pay.
2. By mutual agreement, employers and workers/unions could also agree on other arrangements for the worker's leave of absence.

For workers who need to take a leave to take care of their children or parents afflicted or suspected of having Influenza A (H₁N₁), or choose to stay away from work on their own accord due to contact with a confirmed or suspected Influenza A (H₁N₁) to avoid its transmission, employers are encouraged to adopt a flexible and enlightened approach in granting time-off which may include use of annual leave. For workers who have used up their annual vacation/sick leave credits, employers could consider granting them leave of absence without pay.

Hospitalization Benefits

In addition to existing company health-care benefits and Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) health insurance benefits, public and private health workers infected with Influenza A (H₁N₁) may avail of P150,000.00 medical insurance package. Other PhilHealth members and their dependents infected with Influenza A (H₁N₁) may also avail of PhilHealth hospital benefits amounting to P75,000.00.

Social Security / Employee's Compensation Benefits

A worker who contracts Influenza A (H₁N₁) in the performance of his/her work is entitled to sickness benefits under the Social Security System and employees' compensation benefits under PD 626 (ECC law).

IV. ASSISTANCE TO BE PROVIDED BY THE DOLE

For workers in the country, the Occupation Safety and Health Center (OSHC), the Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) and the Regional Offices, in collaboration with the Department of Health, shall provide the following:

1. Information on Influenza A (H₁N₁) and workplace concerns including issues related to OSH standards and General Labor Standards;
2. Technical assistance in the form of risk assessment, use of protective equipment including a respirator program, workplace improvements to reduce the likelihood of droplet infection and contamination by materials possibly infected by the virus; and
3. Capability-building of Influenza A (H₁N₁) focal persons in the workplace.

For Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS) shall ensure that information on Influenza A (H₁N₁) prevention and control are provided during pre-departure orientation seminars, by the labor attaches, welfare officers and the Filipino Associations overseas.

The DOLE agencies concerned shall make a regular progress report on the prevention and control of Influenza A (H₁N₁) spread in the workplaces. The Bureau of Working Conditions shall ensure the observance of these Guidelines.

V. EFFECTIVITY

These Guidelines shall take effect immediately.


MARIKITO D. ROQUE
Secretary

14 May 2009

