

The First Facility Management Blog

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April 28th, 2009

Swine Flu: Key Facts for Facility Professionals

The following post is based on information provided by Stephen Ashkin, president of [The Ashkin Group](#) and leader in the green cleaning and maintenance industry. It has been supplemented with information from IFMA and updated with data from CNN.

On Sunday (4/26/09), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security declared a public health emergency in a bid to stop the spread of a swine flu virus. As of today (4/28/09), the World Health Organization has raised its pandemic alert level based on newly gathered data.

Richard Besser, acting director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said his agency has confirmed 50 non-fatal cases of swine flu within the United States, including several cases found among New York City high school students. The other cases were detected in Ohio, Kansas, Texas, and California. Besser indicated that the U.S. cases were identical to the swine flu that has been hitting Mexico, where 152 deaths were deemed “likely linked” to the new strain of the virus with more than 1,600 reported ill.

The following are some “tips” for limiting the risk of catching the swine flu. These suggestions come from the [CDC](#). [WebMD](#) has also compiled a list of “Frequently Asked Questions” that may help facilities professionals deal with this issue on a personal and professional basis. (This list appears below.)

Additionally, the [International Facility Management Association](#) has prepared a *Pandemic Preparedness Manual*, a valuable resource for those facility managers (fms) charged with the task of development an action plan. Workplaces have a vested interest in mitigating the effects of a pandemic. The Spanish flu of 1918, for example, affected hundreds of millions of people and resulted in more than 50 million fatalities. Today, a flu outbreak could lead to the absenteeism of 25% to 50% of employees for up to four months, potentially causing supply chain disruptions and the closure of retail facilities, further impacting the global economic downturn. The IFMA Foundation’s PDF is available for download here: [pandemic](#).

There are several easy and affordable ways for fms to assist with employee health, including:

- Displaying hand care posters for the restroom;
- Providing articles for their internal newsletters (such as the CDC tips presented below);

- Posting small signs and other materials to encourage hand washing:
- Considering the installation of waterless hand sanitizer stations in their buildings (to be used **in addition** to washing with soap and water, not in lieu of it); and
 - Placing hand sanitizing stations strategically around the facility where employees congregate—such as elevator lobbies, break rooms, etc. (people tend to use resources that are provided in plain view).

CDC's tips for limiting your risk of catching the swine flu virus:

- 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 hands cleaners are also effective.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, 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 that way.

Frequently Asked Questions from WebMD:

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

Are there human infections with swine flu in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept [here](#).

CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have

reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms).

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to seven days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria

tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. (See aforementioned list of tips from the CDC.)

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water. or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. we recommend that when you wash your hands—with soap and warm water—that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their 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 become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
 - Bluish skin color
 - Not drinking enough fluids
 - Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
 - Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman in Wisconsin was hospitalized for pneumonia after being infected with swine flu and died eight days later. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, NJ occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one death.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products.

Additional CDC Resources:

[General Information About Swine Flu](#)

CDC Health Advisory (pdf) download here: [CDC Health Advisory](#)

LABELS [CDC](#), [FM Alert](#), [IFMA](#), [Pandemic Flu](#), [Safety](#), [Swine Flu](#), [The Ashkin Group](#)

Written by: Heidi on Tuesday, April 28th, 2009 at 10:04 am

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NEW PRODUCT FLASH: Biodegradable Trash Bags

[Perf Go Green, Holdings Inc.](#) offers commercial trash bags designed to biodegrade within two years. Founded in 2007, the company markets and distributes products that incorporate recycled plastics combined with an oxo-biodegradable proprietary application method to produce a film for the bags. Based on environmental claims statements made by the manufacturer of the oxo-biodegradable applied to the bags, when discarded in soil and exposed to the presence of microorganisms, moisture, and oxygen, the company states that Perf Go Green products biodegrade, decomposing into simple materials found in nature. (For more on oxo-biodegradable plastics, visit the [OxoBiodegradable Plastics Institute](#).)



Commercial trash bags from Perf Go Green

In fall 2008, Perf Go Green completed its first major commercial conversion with the Grand Hyatt hotel in New York City. The hotel decided to begin using Perf Go Green custom sized commercial trash bags in three different sizes for its entire operation, including executive offices, hotel trash cans, steward stations, and ice bucket containers.

Other products available from Perf Go Green include 13 gallon tall kitchen trash bags, 30 gallon lawn and leaf bags, and plastic drop cloths.

LABELS [New Product Flash](#), [Perf Go Green](#), [The Environment](#), [jansan](#)

Written by: Anne on Tuesday, April 28th, 2009 at 9:06 am

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