

November 22, 2005

Avian Bird Flue Pandemic

The FAS Contingency Planning Subcommittee discussed the issue at a recent meeting to see what steps, if any Members should undertake in preparation of a potential Avian flu pandemic.

Judging by what we are hearing from Ontario Public Health officials, it is certain the Avian flu is coming and it is not a matter of if but when.

Facts:

It is not going to be sudden. We will hear more and more about it. It is likely the signs will be there to allow time to implement predefined strategies.

A pandemic is not as clear or easy to deal with as any other conventional infrastructure disaster that might affect the ability to access an office building. As such it is not addressed in many of our conventional BCP strategies.

There is no best way of dealing with such a pandemic.

It is important to take such a pandemic into account in designing and developing your Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

Solutions to an inaccessible building might not be as appropriate to a pandemic.

Recommendations

Educate yourselves and your staff about the possible pandemic.

While there is no reason to panic, we should work out a strategy that would best deal with the pandemic that is almost certain to happen.

Consider a clean team approach, where teams of staff are separated in order to reduce the risk of all staff being affected by the pandemic.

Consider arranging for staff to receive the tamiflu medication in order to try and avoid contracting the flu.

You should count on the disruption to your operation being lengthy through staff becoming sick or staying away to care for sick family members.

You should seriously consider cross training your staff particularly for your critical activities in order to deal with the possibility of having a high percentage of staff becoming sick.

You will find that with such a pandemic, having staff working from home would be preferable to congregating staff in an alternate site where crowding would be considered dangerous. Therefore, you should ensure that staff are adequately connected and all home connections are properly tested.

Follow Public Health directives.

Check out relevant internet websites for material on the pandemic such as:

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/avian_e.html

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/avian_faqs/en/index.html

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>