

## COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING GUIDE

<b>Guide Information</b>	<p>The communications planning guide has been developed to be utilized by emergency communications providers including emergency operations centers, public safety answering points and other agencies and organizations that may be tasked with emergency communications.</p> <p>This guide attempts to identify significant issues which should be considered when planning for, responding to, and recovering from a pandemic event. It is highly recommended that each discipline collaborate on the development of their individual plans to assure that all potential actions are identified.</p>
<b>MITIGATION/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS</b>	
	✓
✓ Designate a pandemic coordinator and establish a working group of employees, supplychain businesses, key supporting businesses and if appropriate, the public.	
✓ Develop continuity of operations plans with pandemic specific procedures to maintain delivery of essential services despite significant and sustained worker absenteeism.	
✓ Develop contingency plans to address the lack of essential services or goods required to sustain operations.	
✓ Establish partnerships with other members of the communications sector to provide mutual support and maintenance of essential services during a pandemic.	
<p>✓ Collaborate with human resource personnel regarding communications services functioning with 40% of the work force absent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify the number of communicators required to sustain essential functions.</li> <li>● Are all employees cross-trained so that employees may fill in those positions which are determined to be critical?</li> <li>● Consider planning for those employees who are single parents or those who care for an elderly family member, to be included in the 40% absenteeism rate.</li> <li>● Consider retraining and updating recently retired essential and non-essential workers.</li> </ul>	
✓ Develop formal protocols for implementing delegations of authority and orders of succession.	
<p>✓ Identify the essential services, functions, and processes required to sustain essential services and operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examples of such essential services include call taking, emergency dispatching &amp; communications and situational awareness.</li> <li>● How might normal services be adapted to support the community, region, or nation during a pandemic influenza?</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify potential non-essential services, functions, and processes that can be suspended or adapted to other more essential uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examples of such non-essential services include training (excluding “just-in-time” training), public outreach, and accounts payable/receivable.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Prioritize the identified essential services, functions and processes given their value to customers and the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Call taking on 911 lines takes priority over calls received on a seven digit line.</li> </ul>	

<p>✓ Develop materials to be used for “just-in-time” training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examples of this include checklists or brief procedures on how to operate specific equipment (e.g., telecommunications consoles, computers, etc). These should be used to provide a training resource for non-essential employees tasked with essential functions during a pandemic influenza.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Revise call-taking protocols to include specific influenza symptom monitoring, triage and priority dispatch of EMS and public safety resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● During a pandemic, it will be important for call takers to identify callers who are likely afflicted by the influenza virus and to assign appropriate resources to help them. This resource may not be a responding EMS unit, but an alternative source of care, such as a nurse assists line or other health care call line. Revised protocols should also include methods to address situations where a response is not available or will be significantly delayed.</li> <li>● Procedures should also be developed for prioritizing requests for service and determine methods to minimize responder involvement in incidents (e.g., telecommunicators should not dispatch emergency services to non-reportable vehicle accidents).</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify critical supporting agencies to plan for ways to continue essential business operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Critical supporting agencies for the communications discipline include telephone service providers, communications hardware support agencies, and facilities management personnel.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify assets and equipment that must be operated continuously and/or at key periods to sustain essential functions. Ensure that potential single-point failures and cascading effects of these failures are also identified.</p>	
<p>✓ Identify materials and supplies to sustain essential functions and equipment for up to three months and determine the most effective ways to ensure an adequate supply of these essential materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can these materials be stockpiled or do they have a minimal shelf life which would prohibit this action?</li> <li>● Collaborate with the vendors to ensure that plans are in place to provide these essential resources to their customers.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify policies and procedures to ensure a safe workplace and minimize the transmission of disease among workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emphasize basic personal hygiene and workplace infection control.</li> <li>● Consider closing non-critical common areas such as break and lunchrooms, and ensuring workers do not commingle during shift changes.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify policies and procedures to protect and sustain workers during an influenza pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduce demands on essential workers.</li> <li>● Develop procedures to ensure all individuals are following proper infection control techniques.</li> <li>● Reduce the amount of time spent in gatherings such as shift meetings, breaks, and shift changes.</li> <li>● Develop strategies to assist staff that has children or elder-care responsibilities or other special needs that might affect their ability to work during a pandemic.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Plan for potential interruptions of essential government functions, like sanitation, water, and power, and disruptions of the food supply.</p>	
<p>✓ Coordinate with like sector businesses to consolidate essential functions and workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building external relationships with competitors and distributors during the inter-pandemic phase will enhance collaboration and networking during the pandemic phase.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify the types and numbers of workers critical to sustain essential functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify the minimum number of staff necessary to continue communications functions, assuming a 40% reduction in the available workforce.</li> </ul>	

<p>✓ Identify methods of public information regarding the pandemic. Ensure that all telecommunicators are providing the same information, speaking as one unified voice, and all information has been approved by Incident Command/Unified Command.</p>	
<p>✓ Identify the interdependent relationships and take actions to sustain this essential support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public safety organizations, other communications centers and providers should all be considered.</li> <li>● Ensure that plans for these agencies are in consonance with your agency.</li> </ul>	
<p>✓ Identify special needs communities and individuals who may receive home health care. This service may be interrupted and patients may need to be directed to other resources by communications personnel.</p>	
<p>✓ Anticipate social disruption &amp; disgruntled callers. Identify methods to mitigate and address these types of calls.</p>	
<p>✓ Procure and store a sufficient amount of infection control supplies (e.g., soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfectant, etc.).</p>	
<p>✓ Establish internal surveillance protocols to monitor the health of workers and business stakeholders.</p>	
<p>✓ Ensure availability of medical consultation and advice for potentially ill workers and their families and for emergency response.</p>	
<p>✓ Ensure all employees are properly trained in the types and use of personal protective equipment, the proper methods of personal hygiene, and the recognition of signs and symptoms of influenza.</p>	
<p>✓ Develop training programs for all personnel on personal, workplace and family protection protocols, and actions to take for each phase of a pandemic. Exercises of the pandemic plan and COOP plan should also be conducted.</p>	
<p>✓ Review plans and procedures periodically (at least annually) to ensure that information is up-to-date.</p>	

<b>RESPONSE ACTIONS</b>	✓
✓ Implement the agency's all hazard emergency operations plan and continuity of operations plan.	
✓ Monitor regional/national/international pandemic threat levels for changes that will affect the business.	
✓ Implement specific strategies to protect employees from getting or spreading influenza on the job. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require employees to stay home if they think they might be sick and require them to stay home until flu symptoms are gone.</li> <li>• Provide supplies of hand sanitizers and disinfectants at numerous locations.</li> <li>• Provide personal protective equipment to employees.</li> </ul>	
✓ Identify and assess implications for those at-risk workers and family members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals include pregnant women, individuals with compromised immune systems and individuals with underlying chronic conditions.</li> </ul>	
✓ Implement alternative call taking protocols to properly triage requests for medical assistance.	
✓ Identify the non-essential services of the agency, immediately cease those operations, and reassign available employees to assist with the essential functions identified. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide "just-in-time" training to these non-essential employees.</li> </ul>	
✓ Implement social distancing practices including relocation of workspaces, closing breakrooms and lunchrooms. Employ worksite protection strategies such as providing sufficient and accessible infection control supplies to include personal protective equipment.	
✓ Implement human resource policies which allow employees to work from home or another location.	
✓ Restrict or minimize workforce travel. Conduct business using teleconferencing, conference calls, or other means.	
✓ Increase frequency of cleaning facilities and equipment, ensuring that surfaces which are touched are cleaned after each shift or as personnel rotate positions, with soap and water or a detergent/disinfectant.	
✓ Monitor employee and employee's family social and psychological concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health and faith-based resources should be available to provide counseling to personnel during and after a pandemic.</li> </ul>	
✓ Preposition essential material and equipment on site.	
✓ Confirm that essential suppliers have their material and personnel on-hand and are able to respond and support as planned.	
✓ As the pandemic mounts, closely monitor all essential functions to ensure sustained operations.	
✓ Monitor and forecast potential public and media relations issues. Keep all internal and external stakeholders informed in a timely manner.	
✓ Adjust business actions based on any unfolding economic and social disruptions.	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Throughout the pandemic phase, maintain a situational awareness of how the incident is impacting your agency, and share pertinent information with employees and other agencies dependent on your operations.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Shift supervisors and management personnel should monitor calls received and identify specific geographical areas where a significant number of calls are originating from. Share this information with Incident Command/Unified Command.</li></ul></li></ul> |  |
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<b>RECOVERY ACTIONS</b>	✓
✓ Assess the impact of the pandemic on the agency and begin to implement procedures to return to pre-pandemic conditions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Return to normal call taking protocols, however continue to monitor and note specific areas where influenza related requests are originating.</li> </ul>	
✓ Monitor international and national health information sources for any updates on additional pandemic waves.	
✓ Hold staff meetings to ensure accurate information is provided to employees, including support services available, and the signs and symptoms of emotional problems.	
✓ Encourage the use of Employee Assistance Programs for assistance with coping with loss and stress.	
✓ Assess the impact on employees and their families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mental health and faith-based resources should be available to provide counseling to personnel during and after a pandemic.</li> </ul>	
✓ Perform an After Action Review, documenting strengths and weaknesses of the incident and ensure that these are addressed in the future revisions of the appropriate plans and procedures.	