

FIREFIGHTING PLANNING GUIDE

Guide Information	<p>The United States Fire Administration estimates that 49.8% of the nation's firefighters fall in the 20-to-39 age bracket, which was the hardest hit during the 1918 pandemic. A pandemic of this nature today would cripple the emergency services agencies, which would already be heavily stressed by an increase in calls for service. These two statements alone, illustrate the necessity for fire service organizations to prepare for a pandemic influenza.</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 of these disciplines collaborate on the development of their individual plans to assure that all potential actions are identified.</p>
MITIGATION/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS	
	✓
✓ Designate a pandemic coordinator and establish a working group of employees, supply chain 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 firefighting sector to provide mutual support and maintenance of essential services during a pandemic.	
<p>✓ Collaborate with human resource personnel regarding the fire service functioning with 40% of the work force absent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all employees cross-trained so that employees may fill in those positions which are determined to be critical? • 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. • Consider retraining and updating recently retired essential and non-essential workers. • If possible, minimize the number of firefighters per shift, or stagger shifts to reduce the amount of time spent working close with other personnel. • Identify those essential employees who are cross trained in other functions. • Develop alternate staffing procedures to minimize the number of apparatus and firefighters who respond to a medical incident involving a possible influenza exposure. 	
✓ 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"> • Identify employees who are capable of performing the identified essential services and include these as part of the procedures. • How might normal services be adapted to support the community, region, or nation during a pandemic influenza? 	
<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"> • Examples of these services include training, code enforcement, plan reviews & inspections. • Develop procedures to identify and train non-essential employees to assist with tasks identified as essential. 	

✓ Prioritize the identified essential services, functions and processes given their value to customers and the community.	
✓ Develop procedures to prioritize requests for service and determine methods to minimize fire service involvement in minor incidents. (e.g., consider having an officer only investigate automatic alarms.)	
✓ Identify critical supporting agencies to plan for ways to continue essential business operations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Service agencies should focus on neighboring departments and those who provide mutual aid to assure that continuity of operations plans exist for these agencies. The COOP plans should also be reviewed to assure the plans are in consonance with each other. 	
✓ 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.	
✓ 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for the fire service sector include fuel, fire suppression resources and emergency medical supplies. • Can these materials be stockpiled or do they have a minimal shelf life which would prohibit this action? • Collaborate with the vendors to ensure that plans are in place to provide these essential resources to their customers. 	
✓ Identify policies and procedures to ensure a safe workplace and minimize the transmission of disease among workers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize basic personal hygiene and workplace infection control. • Consider closing non-critical common areas such as break and lunchrooms, and ensuring workers do not commingle during shift changes. 	
✓ Identify policies and procedures to protect and sustain workers during an influenza pandemic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce demands on essential workers. • Reduce the amount of time spent in gatherings such as shift change and shift meetings. • Develop strategies to assist staff that have childcare or elder-care responsibilities or other special needs that might affect their ability to work during a pandemic. 	
✓ Plan for potential interruptions of essential government functions, like sanitation, water, and power, and disruptions of the food supply.	
✓ Coordinate with like sector businesses to consolidate essential functions and workers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building external relationships with competitors and distributors during the inter-pandemic phase will enhance collaboration and networking during the pandemic phase. 	
✓ Anticipate social disruption and/or public disorder when responding to incidents involving patients affected by the pandemic. Identify methods to mitigate and respond to these incidents.	
✓ Procure and store a sufficient amount of infection prevention supplies (e.g., soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, disinfectant, etc.).	
✓ Identify the interdependent relationships and take actions to sustain this essential support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other industries does your organization rely on most for support and vice versa? • Ensure that plans for these agencies are in consonance with your agency. 	
✓ Establish internal surveillance protocols to monitor the health of workers and business stakeholders.	

✓ Ensure availability of medical consultation and advice for potentially ill workers and their families and for emergency response.	
✓ 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.	
✓ 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.	
✓ Review plans and procedures periodically (at least annually) to ensure that information is up-to-date.	

RESPONSE ACTIONS	✓
✓ 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"> • Require employees to stay home if they think they might be sick and require them to stay home until flu symptoms are gone. • Provide supplies of hand sanitizers and disinfectants at numerous locations. • Provide personal protective equipment to employees. 	
✓ Identify and assess implications for those at-risk workers and family members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals include pregnant women, individuals with compromised immune systems and individuals with underlying chronic conditions. 	
✓ Identify the non-essential services of the agency, immediately cease those operations, and reassign available employees to assist with the essential functions identified.	
✓ 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.	
✓ Increase frequency of cleaning facilities and equipment, ensuring that surfaces which are touched are cleaned daily with soap and water or a detergent/disinfectant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that vehicle interiors, shared personal protective equipment (SCBA face pieces), and hand tools are disinfected and cleaned after each use and after each shift. 	
✓ Monitor employee and employee's family social and psychological concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health and faith-based resources should be available to provide counseling to personnel during and after a pandemic. 	
✓ 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.	
✓ 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.	

RECOVERY ACTIONS	✓
✓ Assess the impact of the pandemic on the agency and begin to implement procedures to return to pre-pandemic conditions.	
✓ 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"> • Mental health and faith-based resources should be available to provide counseling to personnel during and after a pandemic. 	
✓ 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.	