

New Mexico State University

Pandemic Influenza - Planning Guidance for Departmental Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

To be better prepared, all NMSU departments and units should develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)—to describe how your department will operate during an influenza pandemic or other emergency and recover afterwards to be fully operational. A template COOP is available on the NMSU Emergency Management website at <http://www.nmsu.edu/~safety/emergency.htm> . For more information on Communicable Disease Preparedness Planning contact Katrina Doolittle, Environmental Health & Safety Director at 646-3327, kadoolit@nmsu.edu or Lori McKee, Director for NMSU Health Services at 646-1512, lomckee@nmsu.edu.

Background Information for Pandemic Influenza

Three influenza pandemics occurred in the last century, and public health experts predict that another is likely some time in the future. No one can predict when it might happen or how severe it will be. *It is prudent to plan for one, especially since these plans can be applied to any infectious disease epidemic or other emergency that is severe enough to impact the NMSU community.*

In the event of an influenza pandemic, NMSU will have four objectives:

- Minimize the risk of pandemic influenza to students, faculty and staff.
- Support students who remain in university run housing, as well as those remaining in Las Cruces.
- Continue functions essential to university operations during a pandemic.
- After the pandemic, resume normal teaching, research and service operations as soon as possible.

Planning Assumptions. Although no one knows the precise characteristics of the next influenza pandemic, NMSU is basing its plans on the following assumptions:

1. An initial pandemic influenza in New Mexico is projected to last 8 -17 weeks and to recur in successive waves over a two year period.
2. To reduce the risk of illness, public health officials may request that NMSU take social distancing measures such as canceling public events and suspending classes. If a severe outbreak were to occur, we should expect to suspend on-campus classes for 8-12 weeks.
3. Employee absenteeism will likely be much higher than usual for a period of about 2 weeks at the height of a pandemic wave (possibly in the range of 20-40%), with high but decreasing levels of staff absenteeism for a few weeks on either side of the peak.
4. For planning purposes, assume that absent employees include Deans, Department Heads or unit leaders and personnel with primary responsibility for essential functions.
5. Fifty percent of your supplies will not be available during the 8-12 week period of contagion.
6. For planning purposes, assume that the wave will occur during the fall or spring semester.
7. It is unlikely that students, faculty and staff will be subject to mandatory quarantine orders. Instead, public health officials will rely on voluntary social distancing measures.

Emergency Communication Systems

All NMSU employees are responsible for keeping informed of emergencies by monitoring news media reports, NMSU's website home page and/or by calling the NMSU Emergency Hotline (505-646-1000). To rapidly communicate with employees in an emergency, we encourage all departments to prepare and maintain a call tree.

Mitigation Strategies

Considering your objectives, dependencies and essential functions, describe below the steps you can take now to minimize the pandemic's impact on your operations. For example, you may wish to stock up on your critical supplies and develop contingency work-at-home procedures. This may be the most

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important step of your emergency planning process. Formulation of your mitigation strategies may require reevaluation of your objectives and functions. Review your department's key personnel, leaders, heads and those responsible for essential functions to identify your department's Emergency Operations Personnel (EOP).

Guidelines for Workplace Dispersement and Fitness to Work

During a pandemic, employees will be encouraged to reduce face-to-face contact between each other where possible. Increasing the physical distance between employees to three to six feet will reduce influenza transmission risk from coughing, sneezing or speaking.

Employees who are sick should not report to work. Be prepared to implement procedures to reduce the workplace risk of transmitting influenza. For further information on preventing flu in the workplace go to www.cdc.gov/flu/workplace and http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html .

Emergency Employee Selection Guidelines

Departments should identify as Emergency Operations Personnel (EOP) those who are responsible for performing functions that are absolutely essential to the continuation of core university operations (e.g., protection of property or safety, support of campus health services, payroll, etc.) during a multi-week public health or other type of emergency when classes and most other university activities are suspended. Emergency Operations Personnel must satisfactorily perform their responsibilities in any type of emergency. For more information on EOP, go to the Continuity of Operations Plan link in the Communicable Disease/ Pandemic Planning at <http://www.nmsu.edu/~safety/emergency.htm> .

Personal Protection Equipment

To date, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued pandemic influenza personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance only for people involved in patient care. The CDC is not likely to issue any additional pandemic influenza PPE guidance until the threat becomes imminent. When the CDC does issue further guidance, NMSU will follow it and Departments will need to provide the specified PPE (e.g., masks, gloves) to employees in CDC-identified high risk job classifications, and to employees who perform high risk duties identified by the CDC.

NMSU assumes that future CDC guidance will address the PPE needs of certain employees who care for sick students. Since CDC's PPE recommendations will rely on a high level of risk (e.g., direct contact via care for sick patients), it is *not* likely that NMSU's limited PPE stocks will be available to all employees that departments may designate as "essential personnel". Departments are asked to assess and prepare for their PPE needs for pandemic influenza. Information and guidance can be obtained at <http://www.nmsu.edu/~safety/emergency.htm> or contact Environmental Health & Safety at 646-3327.

Home Emergency Planning for Individuals and Families

Employees, students and their families should plan for any type of emergency that could impact them in their home, apartment or residence hall. Don't wait—an emergency can occur at any time. Past experience has taught us that employees may not show up for work if they are concerned for the safety and security of their families. We recommend that your employees receive individual and family planning information available on the HHS Pandemic website at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/health>:

Emergency Access to Information and Systems

If access to your department's information and systems is essential in an emergency, you will need to consider remote access (or authorization to allow remote access), contacting IT support, Blackboard, off-site data backup, backup files on flash drives, hard copies, Blackberry/Treo or use of alternate email systems (e.g., Yahoo). Identify what critical data and records are backed up, whether the back up is stored on-site or off-site. Simulate a failure scenario that tests the ability to recover "lost" critical data and discuss how your department will respond to the destruction of critical data.