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SWINE FLU - Are You Prepared?

We can help…

On April 28, 2009, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) placed a special **link** on swine flu that references its "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic". OSHA lists measures to protect employees & recommends employers develop pandemic flu plans tailored to the needs of their worksites. More information & resources can be found in our ***NEWS YOU CAN USE*** archives, at **http://www.unitedwestaff.com/hr_newsletters/2006/hr_newsletter_05_2006.html**.

By now you are no doubt familiar with the steps recommended by the CDC that individuals can take to stay healthy:

- Cover your nose & 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 & water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school & limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

In addition, our Human Resources Consulting Division has these suggestions for preparing your staff:

1) The most important issue to address is your expectations about what your employees should do if they are sick. Make it clear to them that you expect them to stay home if they have the slightest flu-like symptoms. Reassure them that they will not be disciplined for erring on the side of caution. (You can choose to require a medical certificate for return to work or not).

2) Is it clear who your employees call if they cannot come in, & by what time? Is it 2 hours prior to shift or the night before, or 30 minutes following the start of their shift? Do they know that it's not OK to text their absence to you unless you have that form of communication already in place? Do they know they cannot leave a message on the office voice mail? It isn't important what you set up, as long as you set up something & communicate it to your staff.

3) We can supply you with telecommute guidelines, too, but **your first priority really should be about the employee getting diagnosed.** That means relieve them of their duties until they can find out. Also, remember that you can compromise your sick-time policy if you allow your employees to work while they are out sick.

4) You also need to set up a contingency plan for the possibility that several employees may be out at once. Is now the time for that cross-training you always planned to do? Split shifts so that fewer employees interact with each other? Call your local **USA** or other staffing office to discuss getting temporary workers you can call in an emergency? Clorox makes a handy disposable cloth for wiping down phones, copiers, etc.

We will continue to provide you with helpful information that we come across.

Check out the resources noted above as well as these:

- **www.who.int/csr/disease** - It lists the 6 phases of the pandemic & what steps are taken by the WHO in each stage.
- **PandemicFlu.gov** - For up-to-date information