

Preparing for a Pandemic Managing the “Pandemic Periods”

Preparing for a Pandemic

Pandemic diseases such as the current threat of a more virulent “pandemic influenza A:H1N1” (“swine flu”) and the specter of A:H5N1 (“bird flu”) have recurred over the ages, but they tend to be so infrequent that we easily forget how severe they can be—and rationalize modern medicine can stop them before they strike. History has demonstrated that there is little time to plan and prepare once a severe pandemic starts. Therefore, organizations must plan early and prepare sufficiently to offset the very-long term adverse consequences a pandemic period *may* bring.

IRI Analytix consultants have broad experience with government and business continuity planning, including pandemic influenza contingencies. **IRI** professionals have worked with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), community emergency preparedness and response planning, and public health policy development. **IRI** can help you educate, plan, test, and train, to be prepared to a suitable level for your circumstances and organization.

Why Plan and Prepare?

Pandemic diseases, unlike natural disasters, last a very, very long time and depending upon severity have enormous social and economic impact, globally. At the moment, a vaccine for the pandemic influenza virus A:H1N1 is under development, and treatments and containment strategies are unproven. Organizations should plan *with* their constituents without reliance from government to adjust operational contingencies, and importantly to address the human resources consequences.

IRI experts have helped many organizations evaluate planning needs commensurate with respective size, locations, and circumstances. More than one plan may be required to fit needs accordingly—dovetailing together as necessary.

Rationale to Prepare now

Pandemic planning and preparedness are akin to other elements of business interruption and business continuity planning. The focus must be on preparation since planning is incomplete unless *all constituents know exactly what to expect and what to do*. Notwithstanding the importance of sound operational management such as stockpiling, downsizing, and outsourcing, the common denominator is the human resource component—the well-being of all concerned.

For about 40 years, the world has been in a so-called “Inter-pandemic” period—the public and private sector have only recently begun to pay attention to the pandemic threat. But, the A:H1N1 could intensify, and the A:H5N1, as well as other viruses may take hold, yielding a “compound pandemic,” meaning planning and preparation are even more critical.

IRI consultants can help you understand preparation rationale at government-level and community-level to better integrate organizational planning consistent with municipal planning and preparation.

Planning steps

There are six stages to planning and preparing:

1. *Thinking about pandemic planning*
2. *Drafting a plan*
3. *Plan is drafted, but not yet tested*
4. *Testing the plan with drills & exercises*
5. *Training constituents to the plan*
6. *All are trained*

IRI professionals have the means to assist management throughout the various stages. Planning and preparation are dynamic processes that evolve as conditions change.