

October 15, 2007

IDAHO PREPAREDNESS

*Addressing a potential pandemic flu season
and other disasters*

A Supplement to the **IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW**

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CDHD Pandemic-specific Web page
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IDAHO PREPAREDNESS

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If we work together, we'll be ready for any disaster

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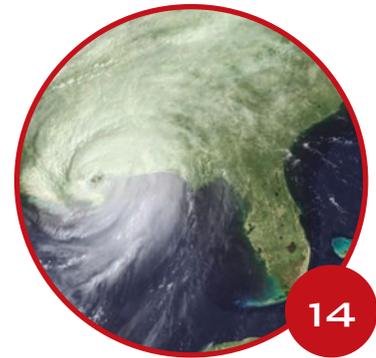
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Governor Otter's message

If we work together, we'll be ready for any disaster



*It is vitally important for all of us –
government, business, schools and families –
to prepare for what may happen.*

We have all heard the warning of pandemics and especially the possibility of pandemic flu. We have good reason to be concerned, but by working together and thinking ahead we don't have to be victims. By following the principles found in these pages, we can tell the story that Idahoans are prepared to face the challenges of pandemic flu or any other disaster that comes our way.

Pandemics, like other disasters, can cause a terrible loss of life and alter the culture, politics and prosperity of our society. Being prepared can lessen the impact of a pandemic and slow the cascading consequences resulting from thousands of people being sick.

We know that the threat of a pandemic in the 21st century is very real. That's why it is vitally important for all of us – government, businesses, schools and families – to prepare for what may happen. Idaho has plans in place and trained professionals prepared to respond to pandemic flu or any other public health emergencies. But I encourage you to share this publication with your staff, business associates and families so that we Idahoans ALL are better prepared.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter is the governor of Idaho.

A **BIGGER** **IMPACT**

THAN YOU **MAY THINK**

450,000 Idahoans could fall ill if pandemic flu struck

*By Dave Fotsch
Central District Health Dept.*

When we consider the potential impact of a pandemic influenza event on Idaho we have to keep in mind that pandemic means worldwide. No nation, no state, no city will escape its affects. We live in an economic global village and we must assume that what affects business as usual here will have a similar impact everywhere else.

In a normal flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 200,000 Americans are hospitalized and 38,000 of them die. The elderly are most likely to die from flu-related illness. According to figures prepared by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the state's average annual death rate from the seasonal flu is 13.4 from 1999 – 2006.

An influenza pandemic by comparison is much, much worse. Health officials most often refer to the 1918 or "Spanish Flu" as a worst-case scenario when trying to calculate the potential impact of a similar pandemic influenza event today. The Spanish Flu killed some 675,000 Americans, or about 0.6 percent of the population. A pandemic of similar virulence in today's United States would be expected to kill upwards of 2 million people. Idaho's share of that death toll would be about 9,000 deaths. But the number of deaths only tells part of the story.

Nearly a third of the population, or 450,000 Idahoans, could be ill at some point during the pandemic. And even those who are not ill may not come to work, because they're taking care of sick relatives or are afraid of being exposed to the disease. In planning for a pandemic, federal Health and Human Services officials estimate that worker absenteeism may reach 40 percent during peak weeks of a community-wide outbreak.

Idaho's workforce numbers approximately 300,000. If 40 percent of the state's workers are off the job, there are going to be some pretty substantial economic impacts. Naturally, those impacts will not be spread evenly across all sectors of the economy.

Consider the things people won't be doing if they are afraid of becoming infected. People will not want to go to places where there is the chance of encountering large numbers of others, some of whom may be ill. Restaurants, shopping malls, big-box stores, large office complexes, concerts and sporting events will suffer substantial if not complete declines in business or attendance.

"Anywhere you have a large concentration of people, they're going to want to

avoid contact,” said Boise State University Economics professor Donald Holley. That avoidance behavior is what will have the greatest economic impact.

“In a worst-case scenario, and I’m downplaying this a bit, it would be nothing more than a typical recession,” Holley explained. “But it will be different. In a typical recession, people lose their jobs and move on, but in this situation they lose their jobs and some people die. It’s just a different dimension to it that scares us.”

Holley believes the situation would be comparable to the last major recession this country suffered through in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It took the country about four years to recover from that recession and a pandemic flu could force changes we can’t even imagine right now.

“We probably won’t pull through it quickly, because it’s literally life and death for some people.”

While some industries may see significant declines in business, others – like health care – will be completely overwhelmed. The estimated number of state residents needing hospitalization due to illness during a pandemic is over 67,000, far exceeding the number of beds in all Idaho hospitals combined.

Some of those individuals will require advanced care and ventilators, and sadly, only a small percentage of them will have access to that level of care. This is especially true in rural Idaho. And remember, health care facilities will be suffering high levels of absenteeism just like everyone else. In fact the rates might be higher because of the

constant exposure to the disease.

Mass transportation may all but come to a standstill. Airline crews and their planes will be grounded when people quit traveling for fear of disease exposure in the sealed passenger compartment. Trains and buses will do no better.

But even if people aren’t traveling or going to the office, they’re still going to need to eat. They’ll need utilities to make their homes livable. Who delivers the food to the grocery stores? Who maintains the water, sewer, electricity, gas, roads and trash services if large percentages of the workforce go missing during a pandemic? Good questions, but there are few good answers. Most emergency planners assume there will be gaps in services.

On a brighter note, there will undoubtedly be opportunities in a pandemic economy. Entrepreneurs may find markets for services and products that would be hard to sell in normal times, such as protective masks, anti-bacterial cleaning agents, vaccine manufacturing and delivery services. The possibilities are limited only by imagination.

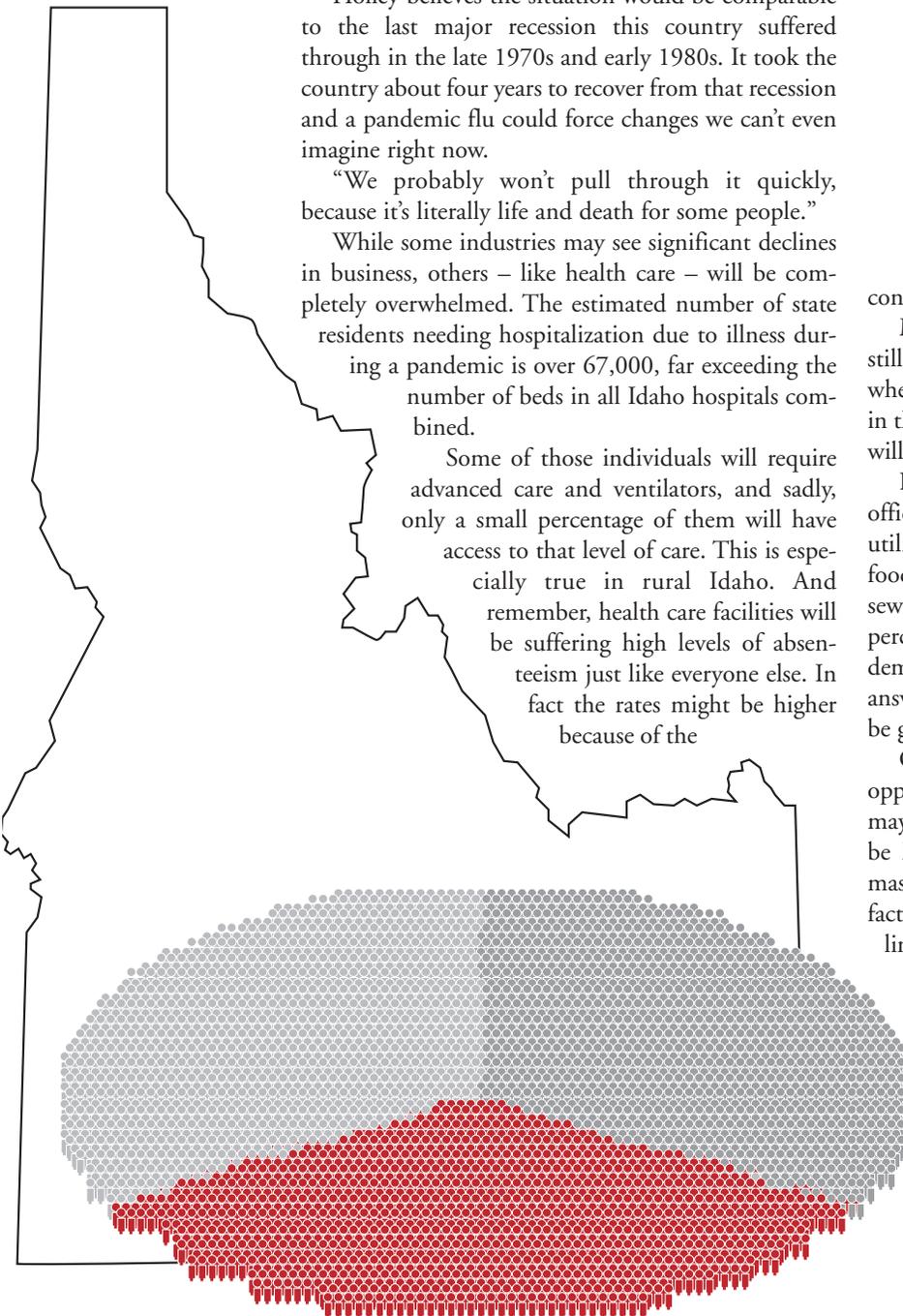
A pandemic will force a considerable slowdown in the economy and surviving its impacts will depend on preparations made now. Some industries will recover more quickly than others and some businesses, especially small businesses, will not recover at all.

Dave Fotsch is the public information officer for the Central District Health Department.

TO FIND OUT MORE:

For more information on the economic impact of Pandemic Flu, visit these Web sites:

- <http://pandemicflu.gov/>
- http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html
- <http://www.businessroundtable.org/task-forces/taskforce/document.aspx?qs=7056BF807822B0F1AD2418622FB51711FCF50C9AE2F68BCAA>
- <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/afp/2006/eng/022806.htm>



LESSONS WORTH LEARNING

*Pandemic flu may be rare,
but its devastation reaches everyone*

*By Laurie Boston
Southwest District Health*

If you don't remember not having a cell phone, a computer mouse, or Post-it Notes, you have never experienced an influenza pandemic or are not aware of the serious impact it can cause.

Pandemic flu is rare, but history shows that it is nothing new. Records show that about 30 influenza pandemics have occurred throughout history. Although it is impossible to predict when Mother Nature might target the human race, many scientists believe that it is not an issue of IF another pandemic will occur, but rather, WHEN.

According to the World Health Organization, an influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak with the emergence of a new strain of influenza virus that is transmitted person to person. Because the virus is new, there is little or no natural immunity and no vaccine available, at least in the early stages. As a result, these new strains of virus have generated pandemics causing serious illness, high death rates, and great social disruption across the world.

The three most recent flu pandemics occurred in the 1900s: the "Spanish Influenza" in 1918, the "Asian Influenza" in 1957, and the "Hong Kong influenza" in 1968, with various degrees of severity. The local impact was especially relevant to Idahoans during the 1918-1919 "Spanish flu" pandemic.

The "Spanish flu" is considered one of the deadliest disease events in human history, causing an estimated 40-50 million deaths world wide and over 625,000 deaths in the United States. Although historians and scientists are not really sure where the flu strain originated, it was called "Spanish Flu" because Spain expe-

SINCE 1900, THREE PANDEMICS AND SEVERAL "PANDEMIC THREATS" HAVE OCCURRED

H1

1915

1918-19
"Spanish"
influenza
H1N1



The most devastating flu pandemic in recent history, killing more than 500,000 people in the United States, and 20 million to 50 million people worldwide.

1925

1935

1945

First identified in China, this virus caused roughly 70,000 deaths in the United States during the 1957-58 season. Because this strain has not circulated in humans since 1968, no one under 30 years old has immunity to this strain

H2

1955



1957-8
"Asian"
influenza
H2N2

1965

rienced an early outbreak.

Glen Newkirk, a historian for the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program, reported that in 1918, the first cases were seen in Spain and quickly spread around the world. When World War I ended, many of the soldiers had contracted this flu and brought it home upon their return. The pandemic spread across the U.S. in a matter of weeks. Many people became ill very quickly. Some who felt well in the morning became sick by noon, and were dead by the evening.

Many who didn't die from the actual disease, died from complications related to it, such as pneumonia. Unlike many other illnesses, the death rate was highest among young adults, killing one out of every 100 in ages 25 to 34.

The first reported cases in Idaho were reported in Canyon County in September 1918, and in less than a month the disease raged across the state. Newkirk states that public officials sent mixed messages, declaring no cause for alarm while in turn taking drastic measures to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Rexburg was placed under quarantine. Sandpoint closed schools and churches indefinitely as did other towns across the state.

Some towns ordered the closure of movie theaters and banned all public gatherings. Challis posted armed guards at both ends of town, in order to stop anyone from entering or leaving the city.

At the peak of the pandemic, Newkirk reported that the hospitals in Idaho quickly became overcrowded with sick people and utilized alternative buildings such as the closed schools and churches as makeshift

hospitals. Small outbreaks of the flu continued in Idaho until the spring of 1919 when the number of new cases declined and regular activities and social events again resumed.

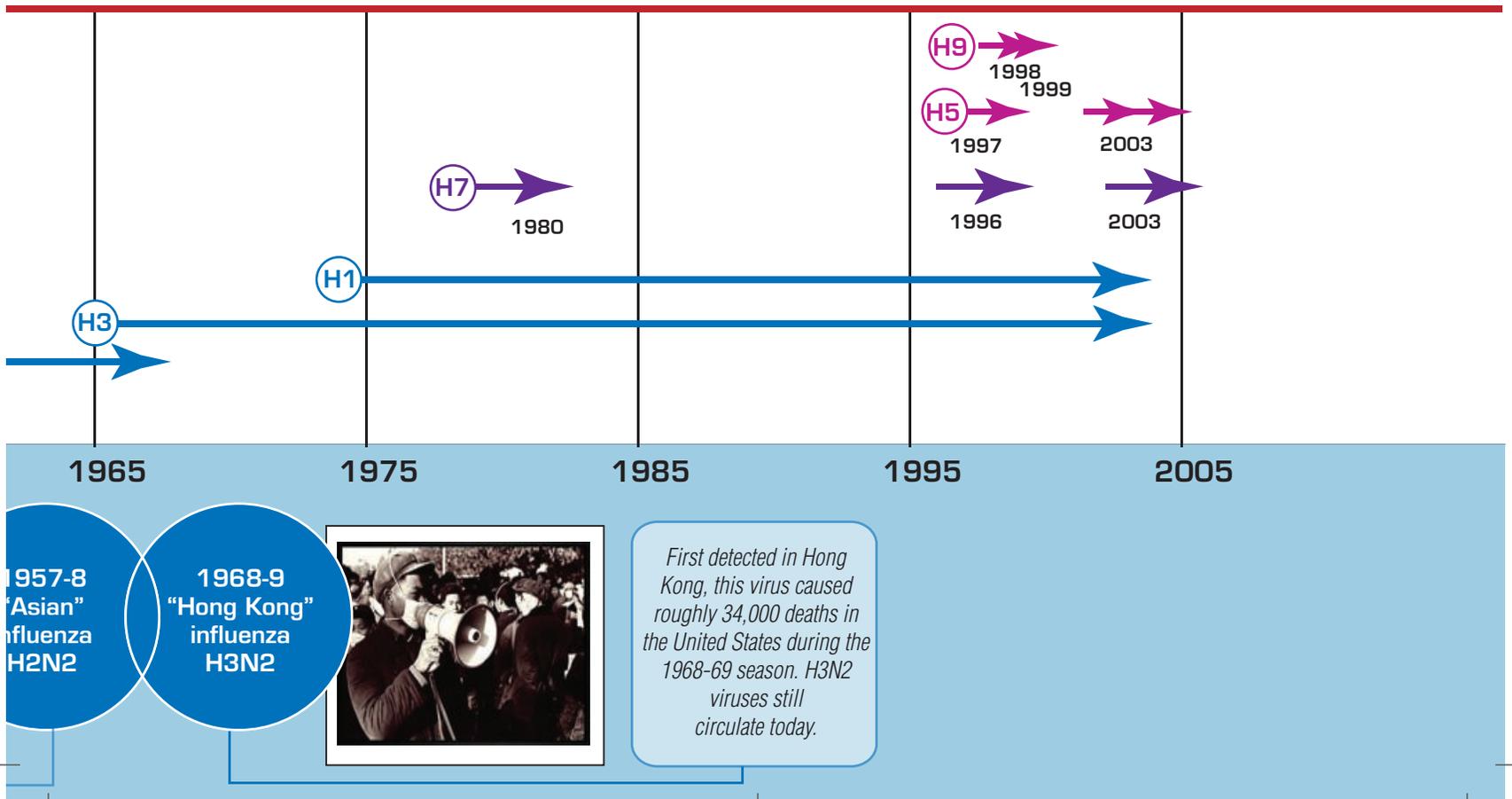
Although health care has greatly advanced, epidemiological models from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention project that a modern-day pandemic could result in 2 to 7.4 million deaths worldwide. When compared to the effects of seasonal flu with about 500,000 deaths worldwide, the need for taking action is clear. Influenza experts agree that the level of preparedness will greatly influence the economic and medical impact of the disease, as well as the final death rate.

In his opening remarks for the Idaho State Pan Flu Summit in March 2006, Michael Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, stressed the importance of taking the threat of a pandemic seriously and warned Idahoans not to be caught off guard.

"When the next pandemic strikes, as it surely will, it is likely to touch the lives of every individual, family, and community," he said. "Our task is to make sure that when this happens, we will be a nation prepared."

It is important to emphasize that although there is not currently an influenza pandemic, a flu pandemic may start without warning, in any country, at any time. However, learning from the past and knowing the potential for devastating impacts empowers us to take action against the threat of a future pandemic as informed and prepared Idahoans.

Laurie Boston is the public information officer for Southwest District Health.



LOOK AHEAD

Use common sense to cope with pandemic

*By Dave Fotsch
Central District Health Dept.*

WILL THE SEASONAL FLU SHOT PROTECT ME AGAINST PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?

- No, it won't protect you against pandemic influenza. But flu shots can help you stay healthy.
- Get a flu shot to help protect yourself from seasonal flu.
- Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma. For specific guidance contact your medical provider or your local health department.
- Make sure your family's immunizations are up-to-date.

When we talk about pandemics we know one thing – the impact will be widespread. As a community we will need to take non-medical steps to reduce the impact of a pandemic.

This is especially important since the development and deployment of a vaccine is likely to take months. Further, we can't know for sure whether anti-viral medications like Tamiflu will work. Planning now can help the entire community reduce the effects of a pandemic, or any other emergency situation.

You may find it difficult to work

Your employer may ask you to stay home if you or a family member is sick. Now is the time to start the conversation with your employer about whether you'll be able to work from home. What are the company policies on sick leave? What would happen if your income is reduced or lost completely because your employer is forced to close?

Schools may be closed for a long time

In Idaho, each school district is responsible for planning for a pandemic event. What is the plan at your children's schools? Talk with the school nurse, teachers, administrators and parent-teacher organizations. What plans are in place if health officials determine that schools should be closed? You may have to plan some home-learning activities and exercises.

Be prepared

Stock a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies because of a disruption in transportation services. Public utilities may also be interrupted. Stocking up now can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and natural disasters. Store foods that:

- Are nonperishable and don't require refrigeration.
- Are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook.
- Require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking.

See the checklist of items to have on hand for an extended stay at home.

Stay healthy

Take common sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit and follow these common-sense rules:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay home if you are sick.

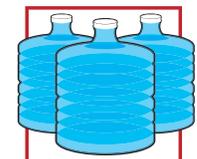
Dave Fotsch is the public information officer for the Central District Health Department.

GET INFORMED:

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. These Web sites can help:

- www.pandemicflu.gov
- www.cdhd.idaho.gov
- www.publichealthidaho.com
- www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov
- www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN AN EMERGENCY KIT



One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation



At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food



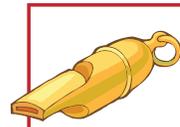
Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both



Flashlight and extra batteries



First aid kit



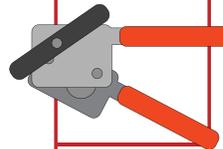
Whistle to signal for help



Local maps



Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation



Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)



Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place

OTHER ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you

live in a cold-weather climate.

- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

Game board simplifies disaster planning

*By Rick Carpenter
Idaho Business Review*



The problems with most disaster plans are that they take a long time to create and they become huge, bulky notebooks that staff often put on a shelf and never look at again ... until it's too late. And by then, the employee skill level may have changed drastically.

So, with the support of the Central District Health Department, three Boise State University professors combined their talents to boil down the process that not only tells the participants where they are vulnerable, but also helps identify areas where employees can cross train. By doing so, businesses can minimize the impact of having a high percentage of employees out due to a pandemic flu or other natural disaster.

Dr. Uwe Reischl, a medical doctor and professor at BSU's College of Health Sciences, Vidya Nandikolla, a research assistant professor in Bio Medical Engineering, and Newell Gough, a BSU professor of management, ended up developing a simple game that small businesses and even larger corporations can use to devise a plan presented in a few pages rather than thick notebooks.

Reischl pointed out that small businesses are the basis of any local economy. He said small businesses have a staff level where without enough employees, they can no longer continue operating. By identifying what primary tasks each business must maintain to stay in business, they can use the game to plan ahead for dealing with problems with a reduced staff.

"The process has to be simplified so that staff and managers can identify weaknesses," Reischl said.

The game has business leaders defin-

ing basic organizational functions then specifying specific tasks associated with each function. Next, the business leader determines how many people are needed to accomplish each task. Then employees are matched to each task by identifying which tasks each employee can do.

Once that list has been determined, each employee is assigned a number. Depending on the number of employees in a company, a number of dice are rolled to determine which employees are not going to be at work in a simulated drill.

The developers of the game – titled "Bird Flu Business Continuity Management Tool" – focused on a pandemic bird flu, which at its peak, would have about 35 percent of a workforce on sick leave.

When the dice are rolled, the employee whose number comes up in the simulation is determined to be home on sick leave. The dice are rolled continuously until 35 percent of the employees are out.

Businesses can use the model to determine whether they can function with a reduced staff, and if not, what they can do to cross-train employees to make sure all of the tasks can be performed to keep the business operating.

How did the two come up with such a simple solution to a process that often take months to identify, let alone accomplish? Reischl, who besides a medical degree also has an undergraduate degree in engineering, said his forte is uncomplicating the complicated.

"I love breaking down larger problems into specific, simple smaller components," he said.

Rick Carpenter is the publisher for the Idaho Business Review.

Businesses can use the model to determine whether they can function with a reduced staff, and if not, what they can do to cross-train employees to make sure all of the tasks can be performed to keep the business operating.

Personnel		
Staff	Medium Staff	Priority Category
5	1	
4	1	
3	1	
2	1	
3	1	
1	1	

IBR uses tool to identify vulnerabilities

*By Rick Carpenter
Idaho Business Review*

As publisher of the Idaho Business Review, I decided to play the Bird Flu Business Continuity Management Tool game with Dr. Uwe Reischl. I broke down the key areas of our organization into news gathering and editing, advertising sales, newspaper and ad design, circulation and the business office.

We assigned tasks for each departmental function. For instance, for the news department, I listed the tasks of reporting, editing, photography, blogging and Web site news updating. We need a minimum of two staff members to accomplish all that they do. Because reporting and editing are priority categories, they are highlighted as functions that we cannot operate without minimum staff.

We have 16 full-time employees so we determined that if 35 percent of the staff was home sick, that would equate to five employees. Since we have eight people who can report and seven who can edit, we were covered with the minimum if all five employees on sick leave were from the news department.

Reischl had me put a number by each employee's name, beginning with the number three (three dice would be needed for 16 employees, and the lowest possible number we could roll would be three).

Then we started rolling dice and eliminating employees. It didn't take long to see where we were vulnerable, particularly in our business office and ad design. Both of those areas had five or fewer employees who could complete the tasks listed in those areas. When the dice eliminated everyone in that task list, we quickly identified where we need to cross-train our staff.

As it turns out, the process is very simple, intuitive and allows for one of those "Aha" moments when you say, "Why didn't I think of that?"



BE PREPARED

Maintaining business operations during a pandemic possible if you plan ahead

*By Dr. Nancy Napier
Centre for Creativity and Innovation*



Rather than waiting for a pandemic and then reacting, the best option for employers is to plan ahead for a possible disaster.

Bad as it may be, preparation should still help mitigate it somewhat.

As an employer, you have an important role in protecting employee health and safety, and limiting the impact of an influenza pandemic or any other disaster situation. In the past, I've talked on NPR 91.5's Idaho Business Matters about some of the ways to prepare your workplace for potential disasters like pandemics. Drawing from OSHA's 2007 Guidance On Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic, here are a few more tips.

What follows are some tips adapted from guidance provided by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration:

- Develop a disaster plan that includes pandemic preparedness. The Web site www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html offers lots of ideas; review it and conduct drills regularly.
- Be aware of and review federal, state and local health department pandemic influenza plans. Draw from those plans to create appropriate actions for your workplace disasters.
- Prepare and find ways to continue operations with a reduced workforce.
- Work with suppliers to ensure that you can continue to operate and provide services.
- Develop a sick leave policy that does not penalize sick employees, but rather encourages employees who have influenza-related symptoms to stay home so they do not infect others.
- Accept that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.
- Identify possible exposure and health risks to your employees. Are employees potentially in contact with people with influenza, such as in a hospital or clinic? Do employees have a lot of contact with the general public?
- Find ways to reduce exposure to fellow employees or the public such as: Use telecommuting from home, which might mean upgrading technology and

communications equipment. Stagger work shifts to limit the number of people sharing an office space.

- Identify business-essential positions and people: Prepare to cross-train or develop ways to function if certain positions or people are unavailable. Train three or more employees to cover business-necessary functions and operations. Communicate the expectation for available employees to perform vital functions during a pandemic.

- Identify which services you may need to downsize and which may require a surge during disasters.

- Stockpile items, like tissues, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment. Be sure to check each product's shelf life and storage conditions and build product rotation into your stockpile management program.

- Make sure that your disaster plan protects and supports your employees, customers and the general public. Informed employees who feel safe at work are less likely to be absent.

- Organize and identify a focal person or team to be the main communication source so your employees and customers receive accurate information during the crisis.

- Work with your employees and their union(s) to address leave, pay, transportation, travel, childcare, absence and other human resource issues.

- Provide your employees and customers with easy access to infection control supplies, such as soap, hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (such as gloves or surgical masks), tissues, and office cleaning supplies.

- Provide training, education and informational material about business-essential job functions and employee health and safety, including proper hygiene practices and the use of any personal protective equipment for the workplace. Make the information available for individuals with sensory disabilities and/or limited English proficiency.

- Encourage employees to take care of their health by eating right, getting plenty of rest and getting a seasonal flu vaccination.

- Work with your insurance companies, and state and local health agencies to provide information to employees and customers about medical care in the event of a pandemic.

- Assist employees in managing factors that cause stress related to the pandemic. Such factors include concern about personal or family illness, life disruption, grief related to loss of family, friends or co-

Employers should provide support, counseling, and mental health assessment and referral, should these be necessary.

workers, or loss of routine support systems.

Managers can help reduce such stress by assuring employees receive timely and accurate communication during the pandemic. Employers should provide support, counseling, and mental health assessment and referral, should these be necessary. Finally, Employee Assistance Programs can offer training and provide resources and other guidance on mental health and resiliency before and during a pandemic.

Rather than waiting for a pandemic and then reacting, the best option for employers is to plan ahead for a possible disaster. Bad as it may be, preparation should still help mitigate it somewhat.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, 2007. Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic. OSHA 3727-02N.

Nancy Napier is professor of international business and executive director of the Centre for Creativity and Innovation at Boise State University and host of the daily Idaho Business Matters program on Boise State Radio News 91. Her most recent book is Managing Relationships in Transition Economies (with D. Thomas). She has published widely and is currently working on research in creative industries and the creative process in organizations.

GOOD TO KNOW

CURRENT WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PHASES

INTER-PANDEMIC PERIOD		PANDEMIC ALERT PERIOD		PANDEMIC PERIOD	
PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5	PHASE 6
An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered to be low.	A circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.	No human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.	Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.	Larger cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans but may not yet be fully transmissible	Increased and sustained transmission in general population.

OCTOBER 15, 2007



SURVIVING KATRINA

New Orleans publisher recalls disaster

*By Mark Singletary
New Orleans CityBusiness*

I live on the coast, specifically the Gulf of Mexico coast. My business is news. My general plan for surviving a catastrophic event is to hang around and cover it. That's what news people do; we cover other people's misery.

Before Aug. 28, 2005, I'd never left town because of a hurricane. Thank God, I decided to leave town just before Hurricane Katrina came roaring through the coastal lowlands of Louisiana and Mississippi. Sometimes I still don't know why I left, but I did, and because I did, our business survived. Me, too.

Before Katrina, our company did not have a sophisticated disaster plan for continuing operations and asset protection. In fact, my Katrina disaster plan consisted of throwing a set of backup tapes in a backpack and hoping like heck that we could access them if needed.

To our credit, we didn't have much time to plan for Katrina's devastation. Just two days before the storm came ashore, weather forecasting models showed the storm hitting Florida. It was late Friday, just two days before landfall, when the forecasting models were changed to include coastal Louisiana and Mississippi. A part of my preparation was getting the backup tapes and keeping them with me. I also made certain that I had batteries, bottled water, cash and gasoline in my car.

All day Saturday I considered leaving town, but was preparing to stay as well.

By Sunday morning – very early Sunday morning – I decided to leave town with my backup tapes. By then I knew we wouldn't be working in New Orleans for a few days and I thought it would be smart to be somewhere else. A new grandchild to visit made the decision that much easier.

As the hurricane made landfall, it appeared that New Orleans had been spared the worst of the storm. A last-minute jog to the east and a weakening storm center meant the devastating winds and storm surge would affect the Mississippi coast much worse than coastal Louisiana.

Our business survived, even thrived, because even our flawed disaster plan was the results of successful methodology and diligence.

But, even though the storm was weakened, it still came ashore as a Category 3 hurricane and even “lucky New Orleans” was hit with hurricane force winds, torrential rain and some rising seawater. Because of the prospect of being without power and maybe fresh water for a few days, I decided to fly to Baltimore, Md. on Monday. I picked Baltimore because our company has a sister publication there (as it does in the Idaho Business Review).

When I walked into the offices of our newspaper Tuesday morning Aug. 31, I wasn’t prepared for what I would learn about New Orleans, and how my life had changed. The protective levee system that was designed to hold back rising water and keep it away from New Orleans had failed. When the levees failed, water poured into New Orleans and flooded the city.

Our offices aren’t in the city, and therefore weren’t flooded, but nonetheless our staff wouldn’t be able to return to work in our New Orleans’ office for two months. I also learned that morning that my neighborhood flooded and my home was very likely covered in eight to nine feet of water and muck.

But that didn’t matter, not then, and not for several more weeks. We had a business to save. With news to publish, employees to find and wondering if the floodwaters would ever recede, we set about rebuilding our lives, and our business.

On that morning, with backup tapes in hand, we rebuilt the data files that we needed to produce several newspapers and Web sites. By the end of the first day publishing in exile, we had produced an electronic version of our newspaper and sent it out over the Internet to our readers. From that point on we never missed a publishing cycle, an accomplishment that I take great pride in still today.

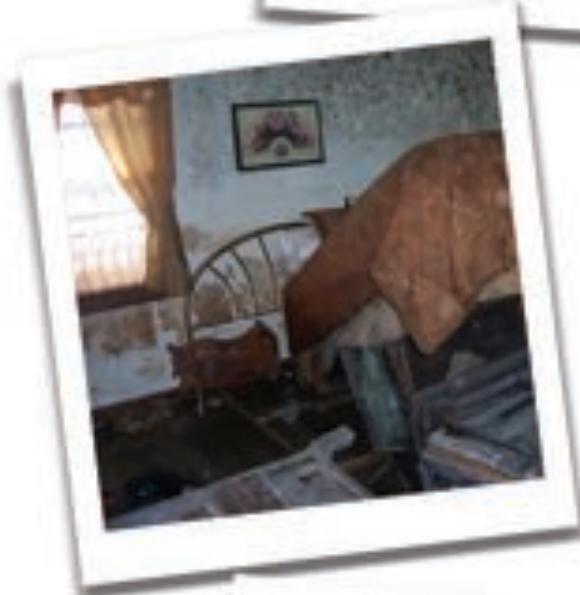
As important as saving our business was, finding our employees and setting up a way for them to communicate with us and each other was vital. All of the resources within our company were set up to locate and communicate with our dispersed employee base. As we found them, we put them in contact with each other with an online chat board, and slowly got each of them busy planning for our future.

Our business survived, even thrived, because even our flawed disaster plan was the results of successful methodology and diligence. Dedicated, intelligent, hard-working co-workers made our plans for survival work, and work well.

We now have a much more formalized list of “things to do” if another tragedy strikes our business. We know, too, that in the end, if the disaster is truly catastrophic, it might not matter. But, as a wise man once said, “failing to plan is planning to fail,” so we have plan.

A damned good one, too.

Mark Singletary is the publisher of the New Orleans City Business.



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Mudslide inspires victim to educate others about emergency preparedness

*By Dave Fotsch
Central District Health Dept.*

New Year's Day 1997 was warm and rainy. The generous snowfall from earlier that winter was already wet and heavy from rains that started before Christmas.

Overnight, another soaking rain poured down on the tiny community of Lower Banks, Idaho, a collection of perhaps 10 mobile homes sandwiched between Highway 55 and the Payette River on one side and a steep mountain slope on the other.

"I was sitting at the table eating my breakfast and watching Jurassic Park on TV... and then it hit," Hal Gross recalled. "My house was hit with a wall of mud that knocked it off the blocks. Then there was this truck coming down from the people that lived above me. The truck was surfing the mud like a surfboard."

In a matter of minutes, Gross watched as nearly everything he owned slid down the hill toward the roaring Payette River.

"I lost everything outside – my house, truck, boat, trailer, two storage sheds, two snowmobiles," he said. "I had just got done stacking 10 cords of firewood. That went away."

Gross and his neighbors had all lived in the mountains for years. They were used to the occasional power outage and snowstorms that could close roads for days. When you live in the mountains you learn to store away some extra supplies for those times when you might not be able to get to civilization.

"We didn't know we were doing that, but yeah, we were prepared for that," he said. "We figured that if something happened it would take up to a week to get help. We had water set aside, everybody had extra food. We made sure we had plenty of firewood and kerosene, for kerosene lanterns. We were ready to tough it out. But this sort of thing never entered our minds."

Gross and his neighbors soon found out that even their best-laid plans left them unprepared for total destruction of their town. They got some temporary help from the American Red Cross, but long-term recovery was slow, difficult and expensive.

"I wasn't very happy with the county's response to the event," he said. "They didn't do very much for us at all. I went to one of the county commissioners and expressed my dissatisfaction and six months later I had the job of fixing the problems. I was the county's emergency manager for about five years."

It was a job Gross did extremely well. In 1999, Gov. Dirk Kempthorne presented him with an award for Excellence in Emergency Management. He also became a preparedness evangelist, educating the residents of Boise County at every opportunity. He now works for the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, helping to make sure the state can quickly respond to disaster situations.

"I think the biggest thing people got to get over," he said, "is 'it can't happen to me.' It certainly can."

Gross rattled off a list of potential disaster situations, but kept coming back to the basics: food, water and medicine for a week, communications, external contacts. Like any disaster situation, a pandemic would disrupt normal activities. Authorities might ask people to self-isolate and stay in their homes for an extended period of time to reduce the spread of the disease.

"People need to be prepared anyway, whether it's pandemic flu, volcanic ash, a

*"We were ready to tough it out.
But this sort of thing never
entered our minds."*



Photos courtesy of Hal Gross

Lower Banks resident Hal Gross became an advocate for disaster preparedness after a January 1997 mudslide destroyed his home and possessions.

Haz-Mat incident or an earthquake,” he said. “They’ve got to learn to take care of themselves.”

Gross reiterated that people shouldn’t expect much help from the government in a pandemic. Government, just like everyone else will be short-handed. Survival will depend on actions taken now.

“Look at your family situation and be prepared to stay together and not leave that house for a week. Have a communications plan. Talk about it; talk about it with your kids.”

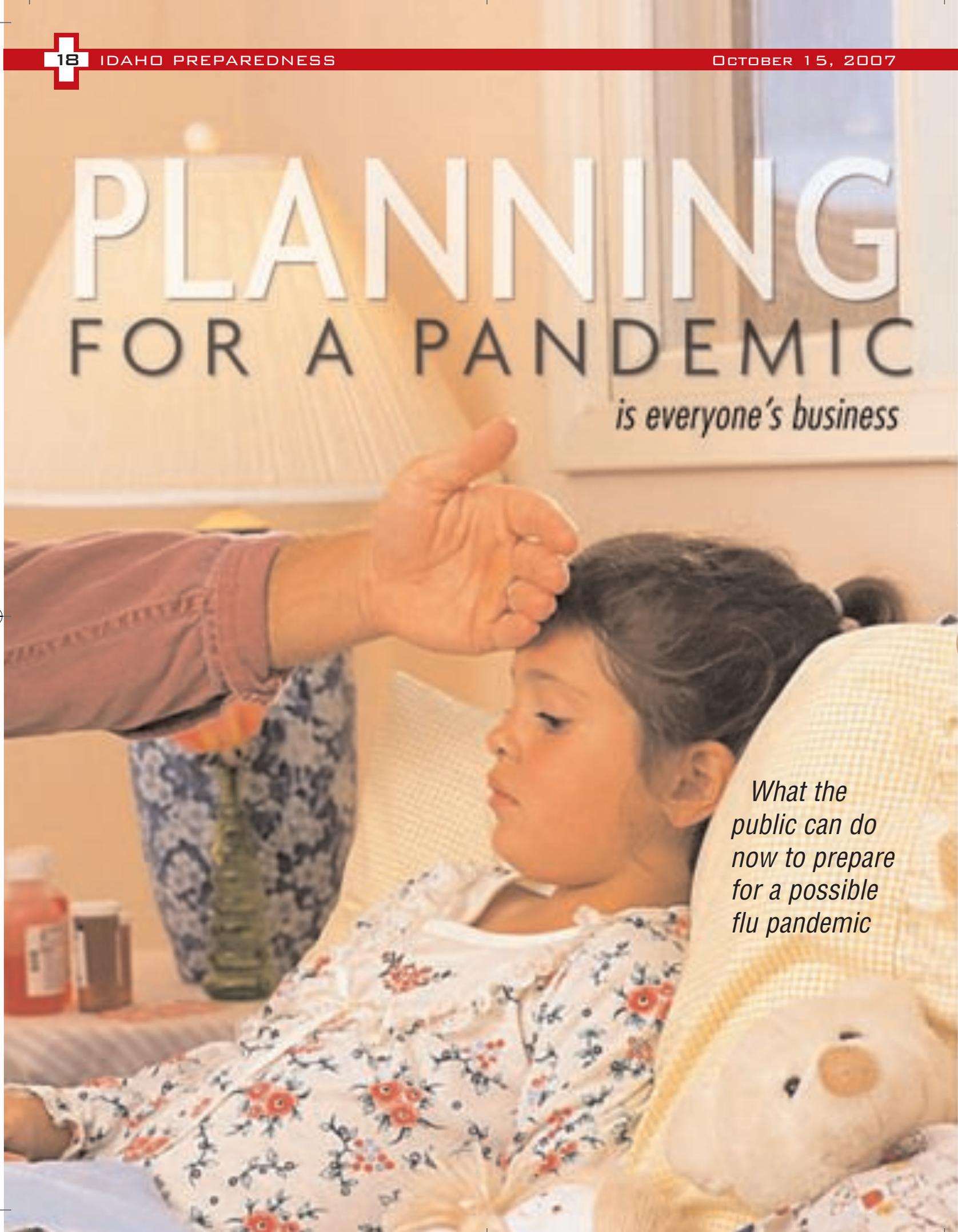
Dave Fotsch is the public information officer for the Central District Health Department.





PLANNING FOR A PANDEMIC

is everyone's business



What the public can do now to prepare for a possible flu pandemic



History tells us that pandemics happen; science tells us it's time to develop a plan. Health officials around the world recommend that schools, families, and businesses prepare a Pandemic Influenza plan.

MAKE A PLAN

In the event you need to evacuate quickly and take essentials with you, every household should assemble a disaster supplies kit and keep it current.



PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

Wash your hands regularly, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand cleaner.

Cover your cough and sneeze and keep your hands away from your nose and mouth.

Stay home when you are sick and keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick. In turn, avoid close contact with people who are sick.

IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

The healthier you are, the easier it is for your body to fight the flu. Quit smoking; improve your diet; exercise regularly; and get regular medical checkups. **GET YOUR FLU SHOT EVERY YEAR!**



BUILD A KIT

Stay informed about pandemic influenza and be prepared to respond. There are simple, low-cost things everyone can do to prepare. Contact Public Health to learn the importance of planning and preparing. Group presentations, planning materials, and other resources are available.

FOLLOW THE THREE 'T'S'

Educators encouraged to take preventative steps to curb spread of pandemic flu outbreak

*By Laurie Boston
Southwest District Health*

Although it is impossible to predict when the next pandemic flu might occur or its severity, it is a known fact that schools tend to be affected by outbreaks more than other settings because school children transmit illnesses easily to one another. Rather than the three "R's" normally associated with education, school administrators are encouraged to remember the three "T's" to prepare their school community for a possible pandemic flu.

According to U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, there are three key steps to take: One, TALK to your local health officials and work together to develop a plan. Next, TRAIN your teachers and administrators to implement the plan. And finally, TEACH students and parents so they understand what to do in the event of a pandemic.

Secretary Spellings recommends that schools develop strong partnerships with their community partners to develop an effective plan that could be integrated into existing emergency management plans.

In response, school districts in Idaho have participated in Pandemic Flu Summits presented at the local level by health departments across the state to plan and prepare for a potential pandemic and to begin establishing partnerships.

Issues addressed during these flu planning summits included the need for schools to prepare for possible school closings, staff and student absences, potential budget strains, creative means to maintain the learning environment, and the possibility that schools may need to be utilized as makeshift hospitals or mass vaccination sites.

Key considerations schools took away from these summits included the following:

- Determine necessary policies / procedures for school closing, since school closure has proven to be an effective means of reducing overall illness rates within communities. School closures may range from several weeks to an extended period of time.
- High transmissions among school populations, combined with a lack of immunity and no vaccine availability for at least several months, could result in extensive absenteeism for both students and staff. Administration could be forced to extend the academic year in addition to spending additional funds for substitute teachers and sick leave for staff.
- Other school-related and extracurricular activities may be cancelled. Public and social gatherings will be discouraged or banned and emergency staffing plans or flex scheduling may need to be implemented.
- Schools can disseminate infection-prevention information to teachers, students, parents, and the local community to help limit the spread of illness.
- Schools can implement a surveillance system in partnership with health

Below: In August, Caldwell's Lincoln Elementary was host to Southwest District Health's Back-to-School Free Immunization Clinic, which provided 724 immunizations to youth under 18. In a pandemic flu outbreak, schools may be utilized for such a vaccination clinic or as makeshift hospitals.



School districts in Idaho have participated in Pandemic Flu Summits presented at the local level by health departments across the state to plan and prepare for a potential pandemic and to begin establishing partnerships.



departments to track rapid increase of absences due to illness and/or communicable disease.

- Possible alternative uses of school buildings during a pandemic, such as for mass immunization clinics or hospitals.

- Accommodations for students with special needs, such as low-income students who rely on the school food service for daily meals, those who have physical handicaps, and those who do not speak English as their first language will need to be addressed.

- Schools should plan for continuity of instruction with alternative learning strategies in the event of school closures, such as Web-based instruction; providing electronic tests; and instruction via local radio or television.

As the center of community life, it is essential that educators collaborate with state and local officials to prepare for a potential pandemic. Steps taken now will lessen the impact of such an occurrence, or may be adapted to enhance school preparedness in order to face any challenge.

“Partnerships between public and private entities are the way it should be, especially when it comes to something as important as protecting our children against contagious or infectious diseases,” said Jonathan Cline, area director of elementary schools for the Caldwell School District. “Everyone in the community benefits from such partnerships.”

Laurie Boston is the public information officer for Southwest District Health.

BE PREPARED:

- Existing contingency plans are recommended for school districts by the U.S. Department of Education (*Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide For Schools and Communities*, <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergency-plan/crisisplanning.pdf>).

- The U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, developed a pandemic flu checklist for schools. The checklist is available at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/schoolchecklist.html/>.

- The U. S. Department of Education has resources, tools, and examples of emergency response and crisis planning available at www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/index.html.

What does "public health" really mean?

If you have eaten in a restaurant, spent time in a hotel, bought food at the grocery store, participated in a "mock" disaster exercise, applied for a septic system permit, attended a public festival, received a flu vaccination, or enrolled in a tobacco cessation program, you know the role that your public health department plays in keeping you, your family, and your community safe and healthy.



Southwest District Health provides a broad array of services focused on promoting and protecting the health of residents and their environment throughout Southwestern Idaho.

Everything we do is about health...
healthy people in
healthy communities!

Southwest District Health has a twenty-four hour, seven days per week duty officer for any public health emergency. Call 1-800-632-8000 and ask for the Southwest District Health on-call representative.

BE A VOLUNTEER!

Are you a licensed physician, nurse, or pharmacist? Join the Southwest Idaho Medical Reserve Corps. Volunteers are also needed for other emergency services such as parking attendants, material handlers, drivers, fork lift operators and administrative support. If you would like to be a public health volunteer, go to www.swdh.org, or call (208) 455-5300.



920 Main St. Caldwell, ID 83605 (208) 455-5300	1008 E. Locust Emmett, ID 83617 (208) 365-6371	824 S. Diamond Nampa, ID 83686 (208) 465-8400	46 W. Court St. Weiser, ID 83672 (208) 549-2370	1155 3rd Ave. N. Payette, ID 83661 (208) 642-9321
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www.swdh.org