

ACTION STEPS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYEES HEALTHY

Regardless of the size or type of your business, planning an taking action now can help protect your business and employees from the setbacks of the flu season.

We are told that only one in 10 small-business owners in Canada has prepared for a potential H1N1 flu outbreak. Logan Katz is pleased to offer our clients and readers some useful tips and information as we approach the dreaded flu season.

Plan Now

- Review your current pandemic flu plan or develop a new plan. Involve your employees in development and review of the plan. Share the plan and policies with your employees.
- Engage the provincial and local health authorities to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.
- Consider ways to allow sick employees to stay home without fear of losing their jobs.
- Develop flexible leave policies to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or for children, if schools dismiss students or childcare programs close.
- Share best practices with other businesses in the community. Work with companies in your supply chain as well as local business groups and local associations to improve response efforts.
- Add a button to your company web page or employee web site so employees can access the latest information on the flu:
 - * www.hc-sc.gc.ca
 - * www.health.gov.on.ca/H1N1
- Purchase supplies such as tissues, soap, and alcohol-based hand cleaners to encourage healthful habits in the workplace.
- Plan for how business can continue if many employees must stay home. Designate and train other employees in the event someone becomes sick to make sure you can continue your critical functions.

Take Steps Now

Take steps now and continue during the flu season to help protect the health of your employees.

- Advise all employees to stay home if they are sick until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). Make sure fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- Employees who get sick at work should go home as soon as possible. If the employee cannot go home immediately, he or she should be separated from other employees.
- Encourage sick employees at higher risk of complications from flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible. Taking antiviral medicines early might prevent severe complications from the flu, such as hospitalization or death.
- Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu. Also encourage employees who are at higher risk for complications from 2009 H1N1 flu to receive the vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/faq_rg_h1n1-eng.php
- Provide resources and a work environment that promotes hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes. Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, and alcohol-based hand cleaner. Offer education on hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes in an easy-to-understand format and in appropriate languages. Go to www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu_09/public/sf_docs/handwash_tech.pdf to find tools businesses can use.
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- If you have employees overseas provide them with information about what to do if they become sick.

Take Additional Steps if Flu Conditions are More Severe

The flu may become more severe and additional steps may be necessary to slow the spread of flu and maintain a healthy workforce.

- Conduct active screening of employees when they arrive at work. Ask all employees about symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches, and sore throat during the previous 24 hours. Employees who have flu-like symptoms should be asked to go home. Continue to advise employees to check for any signs of illness before coming to work each day.
- Extend the time sick employees stay home to at least 7 days. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, even if they feel better sooner.
- Try to change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, or stay home if feasible.
- Plan to minimize face-to-face contact between employees. Consider strategies, such as using e-mail, Web sites, and teleconferences, canceling large meetings and gatherings, and encouraging flexible work arrangements (telecommuting or flexible work hours) to reduce the number of employees who must be at a work site at the same time or in one specific location.
- Provide guidance to employees who are traveling overseas on what to do if they become sick. Also provide information about possible travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers.

This newsletter is not meant to be alarmist and we certainly hope that the hype surrounding a potential H1N1 flu outbreak will amount to no more than the Y2K fears back in 1999. However, given the apparent unique characteristics of this flu, we recommend you be prepared for the potential repercussions of an outbreak.

This 'n That at Logan Katz

Logan Katz is pleased to welcome the newest additions to our firm, Alain Gagnier and (Ms.) Dan Hu. Alain and Dan were both previously in small-business public accounting firms in Sudbury and Montreal, respectively. Alain and Dan will primarily be assigned to our assurance services and both can provide services in either official language. We wish them both a long and successful career with our firm.

Questions or comments?
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