



PANDEMIC PLANNING TOOL KIT

A PANDEMIC PLAN CAN HELP
YOUR COMPANY BE PREPARED
AGAINST ORGANIZATIONAL DOWN
TIME DURING A HEALTH CRISIS.

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Introduction

In the first three years following the turn of the century, North American businesses faced a series of catastrophic business disruptions. The threat of terrorism within North America became a reality on September 11, 2001, creating new concerns about worksite security and evacuation plans.

In April 2003, an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (“SARS”) in Toronto raised a number of difficult challenges for health care providers, but also affected companies outside the health care industry. Businesses were faced with the challenge of continuing regular operations, largely without a contingency plan in place for employees to follow to avoid spreading the disease. In many cases, policies were hastily drafted and the Province’s quarantine protocol was not readily understood, resulting in co-workers being subjected to voluntary quarantine.

In August 2003, the lights went out in businesses in Southern Ontario and the Northern United States. The massive power outage and ensuing power shortage was the third major disruption to business operations in less than three years.

Power shortages and terrorism persist as concerns and now increasing attention is being given to the prospect of an influenza pandemic sweeping the globe and causing serious illness and death. Scientists are predicting that another pandemic influenza will likely occur sometime in the next few years.

The last three pandemics occurred in 1918-19 (Spanish), 1957-58 (Asian) and 1968-69. (Hong Kong)
¹ “Estimates suggest that up to 35 % of the population in Ontario will be infected with pandemic influenza. Of the people infected, up to 4 million will be clinically ill and 12,000 will die.”²

Clearly, Ontario’s business community is at risk. It is therefore critical that businesses have a **Business Continuity Plan** in place in the event of a catastrophic event, whether related to terrorism, power supply, natural disaster or a pandemic influenza outbreak. A recent survey suggests many large corporations have developed contingency plans but many small and medium sized businesses have not.

1 Public Health Agency of Canada Web-site-Frequently Asked Questions Pandemic-Influenza

2 Halton Region Pandemic Influenza Response Plan, A “Tool Kit” for Businesses Continuity, Page 2

Unlike natural disasters, where any disruption to business service provision is likely to be hardware-related, disruption to business operations in the event of a pandemic will be mainly human-resource oriented. “Businesses should plan for up to 50 percent staff absences for periods of about two weeks at the height of a severe pandemic wave, and lower levels of staff absence for a few weeks either side of the peak. Overall a pandemic wave may last about eight weeks.”³

The information contained in this toolkit has been prepared to assist businesses in planning and preparing for the potential influenza pandemic. Nonetheless, the guidelines and resources referenced herein will also assist your business in planning for and responding to catastrophic events more generally.

Staff absences can be expected for many reasons:

- Personal illness/incapacity
- Employees may need to stay at home to care for ill family members
- People may feel safer at home (avoiding crowded public places)
- Others may need to stay at home to look after school-aged children (schools are likely to be closed)

(Source: Influenza Pandemic: Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business, March 2006, Page 6)

In fact, Bill 56, which amends the province’s Emergency Management Act, also amended the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for job protected leaves of absence for employees in urgent circumstances.

That is, an employee may be entitled to leave work where the provincial government declares an "emergency", which is broadly defined as:

“A situation or an impending situation that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk, an accident or an act whether intentional or otherwise;”

In such circumstances, the government may authorize (but not require) any person to provide services for which they are qualified. Such persons are expressly protected from termination during this period (unless for reasons unrelated to their absence to provide such services).

³ Influenza Pandemic: Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business, March 2006, Page 6

During the emergency, employees may request a leave of absence but only for the following specific reasons:

1. Because they are the subject of an emergency order by the government to perform certain work;
2. Because they are the subject of an order by the government under the Health Protection and Promotion Act;
3. Because they are needed to provide care or assistance to defined relatives; or
4. Because of some other reason later prescribed by regulation

Once the emergency is over, the right to a protected leave ceases unless the government passes a regulation specifically providing that the time for leave is being extended because of the effects of the emergency and because of one of the foregoing reasons.

The emergency is deemed terminated at the end of the 14th day following its declaration unless extended a further 14 days by order of the government. After this point, the legislature must vote on any further extension and this is limited to a further 28 days. The legislature may also disallow the claimed emergency.

A Pandemic may have other impacts on businesses, for example:

- The provision of essential services like information, telecommunications, and financial services, energy supply, and logistics may be disrupted;
- Customer orders may be cancelled or may not be able to be filled;
- Supplies of materials needed for ongoing business activity may be disrupted. Further problems can be expected if goods are imported by air or land over the Canada-US border;
- The availability of services from sub-contractors may be affected (this may affect maintenance of key equipment, and is an area that merits close planning attention); and,
- Demand for business services may be affected – demand for some services may increase (internet access is a possible example); while demand for others may fall (e.g. certain types of travel activity).

(Source: Influenza Pandemic: Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business, March 2006, Page 6)

The Bank of Montreal (BMO Nesbitt Burns) Report Indicates:

- Public meetings are likely to be cancelled by the authorities or because of low attendance
- Canada's trade status may be compromised
- Impacts on critical infrastructure impacts are likely to be moderate to serious
- The tourism industry will be badly affected

(Source Influenza Pandemic: Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business, March 2006, Page 7)

Sectors that depend on heavy foot traffic – retail, leisure, gaming, lodging, and restaurant industries could especially take a hit if the avian flu turns into a pandemic. During the SARS outbreak, people avoided densely populated public areas and any place where people congregated in confined spaces. Consumers are likely to cut down on travel and leisure related expenditures, including transportation, hotels, cruises, entertainment, and visits to theme parks and other public venues.

Protecting Yourself Against Influenza

The flu is spread through direct contact with the secretions from an infected person; either through sneezing, coughing or by touching an object that has been contaminated. The flu virus can live on a surface for up to 48 hours.

Consider some of the following precautions to lower the risk of infection:

- Regular exercise
- Eat well
- Get enough rest
- Keep stress levels in check
- Wash hands regularly/use alcohol based hand sanitizers if not able to wash hands
- Get an annual flu vaccine
- When feeling sick stay home
- Avoid touching face/eyes
- Cough/sneeze etiquette: cover mouth and nose; dispose of tissues; wash hands

What You Can Do For Your Employees

Simple steps can be taken by employers in order to help prevent employees from being infected with the flu virus and spreading it.

Consider some of the following steps to assist your employees:

Prevention

- Encourage good hygiene and workplace cleaning habits i.e. have a supply of alcohol based hand sanitizers stationed throughout your business
- Post tips at your workplace on how to stop the spread of germs at work
- Encourage employees to stay home when they are sick
- Encourage employees to get a flu shot
- Inform employees who travel abroad about how to lower infection risks
- Have an infection control program that includes policies and procedures for flu prevention and containment

Business Planning

- Communicate with your employees so they understand pandemic illness and preventative measures
- Communicate with your employees steps your business is taking to prepare for the possibility of a pandemic
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions to ensure resiliency
- Establish or expand policies and tools that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access to applications
- Develop a Pandemic Plan

Regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act must also be kept in mind in the event of a pandemic. Both the Industrial Establishment Regulation (Regulation 851) and the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulation (Regulation 67/93) touch upon the threat to health and safety arising from biological agents and infectious disease.

Ministry of Labour guidelines are another potential source of emergency management guidance. For example, following the 2001 terrorist attacks, the Ministry of Labour published its “Anthrax Guidelines” describing a process for identifying and handling suspicious packages and letters. Although they do not have the force of law, Ministry guidelines are a valid source of reference for attaining compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act as they are issued by the agency responsible for enforcing the Act.

What Is A “Business Continuity” Pandemic Plan?

“Business continuity” means ensuring that essential business functions can survive a natural disaster, technological failure, human error, or other disruption. Pandemic flu demands a different set of continuity assumptions since it will be widely dispersed geographically and potentially arrive in waves that could last several months at a time.

Your Pandemic Plan Should:

Identify and safeguard copies of your company’s essential corporate records

- Constitution, bylaws, charters, franchises and orders-in-council
- Accounts payable and receivable
- Bank and audit records
- Capital and fixed assets records
- Contracts and agreements
- Licenses and permits
- Leases, deeds, property and land files
- Blueprints and technical drawings
- Inventories
- Mailing lists
- Organization charts
- Financial signing authorities
- Union agreements
- Software
- Supplier listing
- Insurance policies
- Procedural manuals
- Personnel records, payroll documents, pension fund files, salary deduction lists
- Annual reports
- Research, technical data and specifications on specialized projects
- Special agreements with clients
- Sales records and guarantees
- Other documents essential to the operation of your business

Identify and prioritize key services, critical positions and skills required

- What and who are essential to keep your business running?
- What are the core skills required to perform essential functions?

Plan for Large Absence (up to 50% at any given time, for up to 18 months)

- When will portions of the business be shut down? Who will make that decision?
- Can people work from home?
- Succession planning and back-up planning: every essential role should have back up and guidelines for decision-making.

Protection of Staff Health

- Infection control practices and flu shots
- Curtail direct interaction with public if possible
- Self-screening and quarantine
- Protective equipment
- Counseling services

Communications & Knowledge Management

- Identify essential communication networks
- Internal and External pandemic communication plans
- Back up essential business information

Job/Skills Inventory

- Identify which employees have the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform critical functions
- Provide cross-training for critical positions

(Source: WSIB Pandemic Planning, Emergency Program Coordinator, WSIB)

Where Can I Find Out More Information?

In the event of an emergency situation, it is always prudent to consider contacting the local Medical Officer of Health. The Medical Officer of Health is responsible for critical services governed by the Board of Health in each local Health Unit. The Medical Officer of Health is endowed with broad powers under the Health Protection and Promotion Act and these may impact on your business and employees.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, a key source of objective information will emanate from Emergency Management Ontario (“EMO”). The EMO is an agency of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and is responsible for coordinating emergency response activity in the Province. EMO acts pursuant to the Emergency Management Act.

The federal Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (“OCIPEP”) is the federal equivalent to EMO. It will take a lead role in coordinating information on emergencies that span multiple provinces or have an impact on national infrastructure (e.g. inter-provincial transport, telecommunications, banking etc.).

Finally, consider consulting the following resources to assist with your planning and deployment efforts:

Ontario Ministry of Health & Long Term Care – web-site contains information on the flu pandemic including business planning guidelines.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/flu/panflu/panflu_mn.html

Public Health Agency of Canada – web-site dedicated to the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan. The web-site does not contain information specifically pertaining to the business community, however, it does have useful information about the pandemic and Canada’s national plan. The web-site can be found at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cpip-pclcpi/index.html

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters – March 2006 CME released a 90 page document titled Continuity Planning Guide for Canadian Business. The guide provides businesses with tools and information that will be required to assist in minimizing the impact of an influenza pandemic on the health and safety of employees, suppliers, customers and the bottom line.

The guide can be purchased by individuals for \$50.00 or downloaded free of charge at:

www.manufacturingourfuture.ca

Local Health Units – Many of the local health units have released pandemic influenza plans for their communities. Some of the plans contain information dedicated to the business community, encouraging them to plan ahead for the pandemic and provides them with some helpful tools and suggestions

Many of these guides are available on the local Health Units web-site.

Example: www.publichealthontario.ca

Ministry of Economic Development – New Zealand - October 2005 Ministry launched on their web-site two separate guides on web-site to assist business continuity planning for influenza pandemics.

Business Continuity Planning Guide, contains a range of information designed for general use by businesses and other organizations in New Zealand.

www.med.govt.nz/templates/MultipageDocumentTOC_14455.aspx

Pandemic Planning Information Kit tailored for infrastructure providers in the energy, communications, transport, water and waste sectors. Contains a version of the Planning Guide and some associated documents to assist their planning.

www.med.govt.nz/templates/StandardSummary_14457.aspx

The web-site can be found at: www.med.govt.nz/templates/contentTopicssummary_14451.aspx

Ebrp Solutions – on-line tool kit and templates that that can be downloaded free of charge to assist businesses with continuity and disaster planning.

The web-site can be found at: www.ebrp.net

United States Federal Government – Web-site dedicated to the flu pandemic. The web-site contains a section for businesses, providing information about the pandemic as well as a Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist.

The web-site can be found at: www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html

BMO/Nesbitt Burns - Dr. Sherry Cooper released a special report titled "Don't Fear/Fear or Panic/Panic, an economist's view of pandemic flu." The report includes information about the pandemic along with economic implications. A portion of the report is dedicated to the business community with recommended steps businesses can take to maintain business continuity.

The web-site can be found at:

www.bmonesbittburns.com/economics/reports/20051011/dont_fear_fear.pdf

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) – Web-site contains a Pandemic Preparedness Checklist for companies and businesses. The checklist will assist a business in preparing for the pandemic.

The web-site can be found at: www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/Public/flu_checklist

Vancouver Coastal Health Pandemic Planning Task Force - A comprehensive planning guide which includes a full chapter on the Private Sector, providing information and tools to minimize the impact of a pandemic. Information is provided on reducing the risk of contracting influenza, screening for all workers, planning for supply disruption and potential loss of customers.

The web-site can be found at: www.vch.ca/public/communicable/docs/pandemic/title_page.pdf

World Health Organization – gives up to date information on the spread of the flu pandemic.

The web- site can be found at: www.who.int

Contact Phone Numbers

Government of Ontario Emergency Management Unit

1-866-331-0339

Public Health Agency of Canada

1-866-999-7612

416-973-4389

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)

613-991-3301

Preparedness Checklist for your Business¹

It is critical that businesses have a Business Continuity Plan in place in the event of a catastrophic event, whether related to terrorism, power supply, natural disaster or a pandemic influenza outbreak. This toolkit has been designed to assist businesses with their planning efforts.

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Business Continuity Plan		
Who has responsibility for activating the Business Continuity Plan for your organization and who is that person's back up?		
Has your organization identified a process through which the decision will be made to activate and terminate the Plan?		
Do you have a communication strategy for reaching employees, business partners and supply chain partners as a result of having to implement any section of the Business Continuity Plan?		
Planning		
Who do you need input from both internally and externally to prepare and review a Business Continuity Plan for your business? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • Legal counsel • Community partners • Labour Unions and bargaining agents • Other 		
Who is in charge in the event of a pandemic episode and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined? Who makes what decisions? Who notifies the various stakeholders?		
Is the Pandemic Influenza Business Continuity Plan integrated with your emergency preparedness plan(s)?		
Who needs to approve the Business Continuity Plan?		

An electronic version of this checklist is available for download at: www.occ.on.ca

¹ Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Testing of the Plan		
How will you test and/or evaluate your Business Continuity Response Plan?		
Do you have a mechanism to periodically review & update your plan?		
Decision-making and Reporting		
Who will be in charge and make decisions within your business concerning services during a pandemic/emergency episode?		
What will be the mechanism for regular reporting to your management staff/Boards/Government (whichever are appropriate for your organization) councils during a pandemic episode?		
Is there a contact list of all internal and external client and partner agencies, supply chain partners and stakeholders?		
Is there a contact list of all senior staff within your business?		
If public transportation became a problem, can employees arrange alternate forms of transportation to work?		
If necessary, could staff live at the work location or alternative work location for some period of time?		
Have you prepared site-specific notification for office closures and contacts for the public/clients?		
Surveillance / Attendance		
Who in your organization has responsibility for collecting/ managing information about staff absenteeism? Who is that person's back up?		
Do you have data on the average number of staff absences due to illness and vacation at different times of the year (monthly rates)?		
Is there a mechanism within your business to monitor and report increasing staff absenteeism due to illness to health authorities (e.g., Health and Safety Coordinator, Health Department)? (An increase in staff absenteeism due to illness might be attributed to the spread of infections among co-workers suggesting an outbreak of disease.)		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Delivery of Essential Services to the Community		
<p>Does your business have a responsibility for the provision of services to the community during an emergency?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of food or other supplies • Mass housing • Care for special needs people • Home care and child care 		
<p>Have these services been planned for should there be a staff reduction due to absence?</p>		
<p>Who has signing authority for expenditures during an emergency and who is that person’s back up?</p>		
<p>Are there clearly stated policies and procedures that cover signing authority and acquisitions?</p>		
<p>What is the staff capacity of your business and are there provisions to bring in additional staff and/or volunteers?</p>		
<p>Have alternative service providers been identified to assist with maintaining your essential services? What duties will they have and what additional training will they require? Have insurance coverage and union issues been addressed?</p>		
<p>What is the surge capacity of services delivered by your business?</p>		
<p>Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/ facilities that may be needed during a pandemic episode?</p>		
<p>Is there a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment, e.g., pagers, cell phones, refrigerators etc. can be obtained with minimum delay?</p>		
<p>Who has authority for ordering repair/replacement equipment and who is that person’s back up?</p>		
Materials and Supplies		
<p>Are you currently stocked with all necessary supplies for regular day-to-day functions?</p>		
<p>Does your business have contact lists for all your suppliers and alternate suppliers?</p>		
<p>Does your business have access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, photocopy machines in case repairs are needed?</p>		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Materials and Supplies		
Does your business have contact lists for all equipment repair persons?		
Who authorizes repairs and supply/equipment orders? Are there other employees who can take over this responsibility in the event of an emergency?		
Training / Orientation		
What are the training needs pertaining to emergency and pandemic flu contingency plans for internal and external business partners/agencies? What additional training will be required?		
What orientation/education should be arranged for your employees to raise awareness about a pandemic flu emergency?		
Has staff been made aware of basic infection control guidelines to prevent the transmission of influenza? (e.g., handwashing procedures etc.)		
Delivery of Services		
Have services in your business been prioritized to take into account minor to major staff absences due to illness?		
What is the role of your business with respect to assisting with service demands in health care facilities (e.g., Hospitals, Long-term care facilities, Homes for the aged, Homes for special care) and has this plan been communicated to these facilities?		
Who will make decisions about reducing levels of service and/or cancelling services temporarily?		
Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies?		
If not, how long does it take for approval to be granted?		
How will reduction/temporary cancellation of regular services be communicated to local clients, stakeholders, supply chain partners, the public and business partners?		
Does your plan identify the need to consult with the Medical Officer of Health prior to any major communication strategy about reducing service delivery due to staff absences relating to influenza?		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Delivery of Services		
Could any of the business’s services be provided from another work location?		
<p>Have sites providing vulnerable services (such as nursing homes, homes for the aged, homes for special care) been identified and has the inventory of such services been shared with appropriate service providers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient transportation • Patient assessment services • Food services • Equipment supply services (i.e. oxygen equipment) 		
Has your business developed a list of skills and professional competencies of staff that are transferable to other business units, agency functions or for support to health care institutions in the community?		
Have support services been planned for workers, such as transportation, day-care, meals and grief counselling?		
Do you have a plan to replenish depleted supplies?		
Human Resources		
Do you have policies or procedures to address your employees’ psychological impacts resulting from an outbreak?		
Do you have policies or procedures to accommodate your employees’ family obligations during an outbreak?		
Has your agency prepared an inventory of skills in the event that people from your business are required to perform duties/ functions in other business units/agencies to maintain essential services?		
Have liability issues been addressed for volunteers and re-assigned staff members?		
Do you have a current list of staff complete with telephone numbers? Has someone been assigned responsibility to ensure that it remains current?		
Do you have a current list of recently retired staff (complete with telephone numbers) who may be contacted in the event of extreme staff shortages?		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Human Resources		
Do relevant employees have access to a list of all employees and relevant stakeholders?		
Is there a copy of the Health and Safety manual on site in your business?		
Who will be in charge of communicating to the employees in your business? Do you have a backup person(s) to take on this responsibility?		
Who will represent your business on community emergency response team(s), if requested to participate, and are there back-ups to those persons?		
Who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues? Are there staff designated as backup for these positions?		
In the event of a staff shortage, what roles/responsibilities could external contract workers and volunteers fill? What roles/responsibilities could co-workers fill?		
Who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers? Is there a backup person for this job?		
Does your business have a system staff use to report absence due to illness and other reasons? Is this information accessible on a daily basis?		
Records and Record Keeping		
Has your business developed appropriate records keeping procedures for items such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff absences • Vacation • Complaints and issues 		
Do you have a plan to record significant decisions that were made during a pandemic flu/emergency?		
Is regular reporting to Boards/government required?		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Communication		
In your organization, who has primary responsibility for communicating with the public/business partners/supply chain partners/staff?		
Who is that person's back up in the event that this person is sick with the flu?		
Are there people in your organization who have sole access to incoming information, e.g., business information, incidence reports, complaints etc. If so, have you arranged for designates to receive this information?		
Does your organization maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files? Is there a designate for the person who has responsibility for the inventory?		
If your information technology person is ill, to whom can you turn if you experience computer problems?		
How does your staff communicate with each other during office hours and after-office hours? Is there an alternate form of communication they can rely on, e.g., cell phones, pagers etc?		
Who are your security contacts should there be a problem with physical access to your work location and is there a back up to your security contacts?		
If mail service is interrupted, are there critical items you need to receive or deliver that you will need alternative arrangements for?		
Does your organization send out time-sensitive letters or documents and is there a back-up system for these?		
How are courier packages generally received and sent out?		
How will you send out public service announcements and news releases? Do you have a process for consulting with the Health Department prior to any releases?		
Will employees and the public be able to access a website or telephone number to get updates on service delivery news?		

Roles and Responsibilities	Check if addressed	Individual responsible for each action/decision
Recovery		
What are the immediate lessons learned?		
Who will have the authority to notify the various employees, clients, and stakeholders regarding reinstating services and finally return to full service?		
Who will be responsible for evaluating your local response?		
What factors should be examined as part of the evaluation?		
Have any counselling needs for staff been provided for?		



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