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Posted date: 9/21/2009

## Swine Flu: Businesses Must Have 'Pandemic Plan'

*Commentary - Dr. Leonard M. Okun*

Hardly a day goes by without more news on the H1N1 virus and the potentially catastrophic impact that could occur in the months ahead.

It's easy for people who are not health care providers to think that they don't have to do anything to prepare.

But all businesses — large and small — should take the time now to put in place proactive measures to help prevent the spread of H1N1, also referred to as swine flu.

Businesses should also know what steps they would take if the virus affects their employees and their business.

The first wave of the virus spread last spring, giving us a glimpse of its potential and also a chance to evaluate preparedness.

The H1N1 virus spread from an initial 19 cases affecting two countries to more than 182,000 cases spread over 100 countries with 556 reported deaths as of Aug. 22.

The World Health Organization rapidly moved its alert from Pandemic Phase 3 to a full-blown Pandemic Phase 6 status based on the relatively easy transmission of this virus between humans.

### WEEKLY EDITION

Sept. 21 - 27, 2009



#### Doug Wilson Defaults on \$25M Loan for Redevelopment Projects

One year after the failure of Lehman Bros., and the subsequent cratering of the world's equity markets, the fallout is still being felt around the globe, including here in San Diego.



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Companies that believed they had very good plans to deal with an epidemic found that they were unable to activate components of them due to limited availability — or no availability — of essential supplies such as face masks, hand sanitizers, cleaning agents and anti-viral drugs.

Many other companies found that they had not properly developed plans and weren't prepared in the early stages of this pandemic — when the situation was evolving

daily and the level of information was low and uncertainty was high.

So what can an employer do now to learn from the lessons of the early stages of this pandemic?

Consider the following:

- Appropriate Travel. Evaluate travel policies for associates both internationally and domestically. Although no specific areas have been quarantined by the World Health Organization, many employers restricted travel to Mexico or the U.S. because these were outbreak “hot spots.” Companies need to have a process in place to determine when, where and how travel is appropriate.
- Social Distancing. Determine whether you can operate your business without close contact among your employees and customers. Is the company prepared to have employees work from home and when should such a program be initiated? When should group events such as those that occur in meeting rooms and cafeterias be avoided?

### Pharmacies Switching Patients' Drugs to Save Money, Some Charge

Consider this scenario: A patient walks into a pharmacy, drops off a prescription and ends up with an entirely different drug than the one prescribed by his or her doctor. Not a generic drug, but a nonchemically equivalent alternative drug within the same class

#### Correction

In a Page 1 story titled “Union-Tribune Claims It’s Here to Stay” appearing in the Sept. 21 edition, the San Diego Business Journal misreported that The San Diego Union-Tribune will conduct 116 staff reductions.

WEEKLY EDITION

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