

Grand Forks County
Pandemic Guidelines

Version: 0

August 21, 2009

Grand Forks County Pandemic Guidelines

Table of Contents

1. Pandemic Plan and Structure
2. Employee Health and Safety
3. Human Resources Policies
4. Internal and External Communications
5. Security
6. Public and Media Relations

Pandemic Plan and Structure

Grand Forks County recognizes that our mission is to maintain essential services for the welfare and safety of our residents. A pandemic has the capacity to reduce county services and every effort must be made to respond to the essential programs that we are tasked with under the North Dakota Century Code. Local government officials must continually assess the situation in order to determine their course of action. Upon full implementation of the plan, the Grand Forks County Commission may issue an Emergency Declaration.

By the direction of the County Commission a Pandemic Plan is created to address workforce and program problems that may arise in the event the Grand Forks region is threatened by a pandemic illness. The Director of Administration with the assistance of the department managers are the core group that creates and administers policy approved by the Commission.

The chain of command with exception of elected officials requires employees to bring any issues or problems to their respective department manager. The department managers will advise the Director of Administration, Public Health Officer, or the Emergency Manager of workforce shortfalls and staffing needs in the event that large portions of our employees are unable to work due to the illness related problems. The Director of Administration, Public Health Officer or the Emergency Manager will advise the commission of any problem that would impact the County's ability to meet program requirements. If department managers are unavailable a designee will assume responsibility of prioritizing the daily workload. If the Director of Administration and the Emergency Operations Manager are unavailable, department managers will coordinate with chair or any available member of the County Commission.

Departments have created a prioritized list of services that will be provided to the Commission and maintained in their department pandemic plan. These services could be delayed or temporarily suspended due when staffing levels are needed to support essential daily operations. This Commission will approve the list of services.

Department managers will designate a clear and concise chain of command or supervisory line of succession. The designation will take place and applied based on the absence of staff affected by the disease. This plan will be part of the department pandemic plan and kept current. The Commission will approve the department managers supervisory line of succession and a copy will be maintained in the Office of the Commission.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will provide a pandemic threat level or phases. The range of phases are one through six, with six being the highest threat level. Since these levels may not seriously impact every region of the world, Grand Forks County will rely on the Center for Disease Control and the County Public Health Department to determine what appropriate response is needed to meet the threat. These potential "trigger points" will be determined on an as needed basis.

Based on how the pandemic disease spreads and affects the county's essential services the county will work with public and private entities to include the City of Grand Forks to see if a sharing or partnering of resources is possible.

Employees Health and Safety

Prevention is an important feature in reducing the spread of the disease through respiratory etiquette, hand-washing and social distancing . The Grand Forks County Commission authorized the purchase of respirator masks for all employees. Two types of masks were purchased one for law enforcement and the other for non-law enforcement employees. The law enforcement employees have a 25 day supply while non-law enforcement employees have a 15 day supply. The mask will function until they become wet. This should allow the supply to last for a considerably longer period of time. The masks have a 10 year shelf-life and will be staged throughout the county departments. To initiate the use of masks, Public Health will advise the county when such measures will be taken.

The County has made available hand-soaps, one bottle for each employee, with a combination of sanitary wipes and/or spray bottles with cleaning fluid. Once again Public Health will advise the county when the use of the cleaning supplies becomes necessary. When the supplies are distributed, **each** employee will be responsible for cleaning their desk tops at least once a day and wipe down such items as door handles and telephone receivers. These items will be staged with the respiratory masks throughout the County.

Training on prevention techniques such as washing hands, use of the masks, distancing from customers and employees, and understanding potential symptoms, may be part of our annual work comp training or when needed.

The county also offers flu shots through the Public Health Department. These shots are covered by our health insurance provider at no cost to the employee. These shots can be taken at Public Health, third floor of the County Office Building or your medical provider. Grand Forks County encourages all employees to take their annual flu shot.

Human Resource Policies

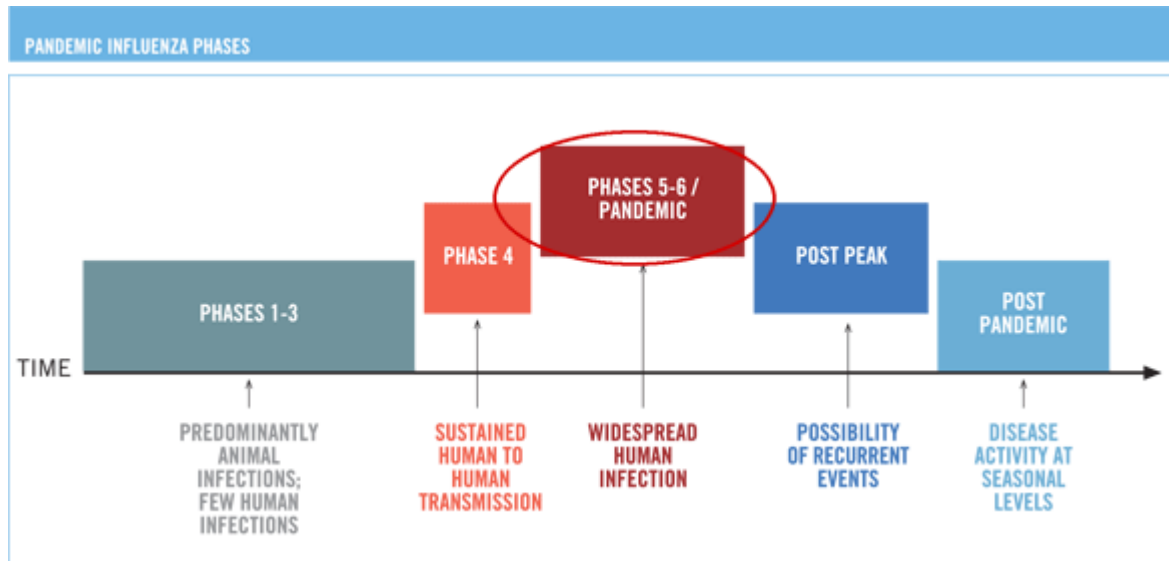
These policies would be in effect when the World Health Organization coupled with a statement by the State Health Department and/or the Public Health Officer, declares a pandemic phase 5 or higher. A breakdown of the various phases with a definition of each phase is provided by the World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/ as of August 21, 2009.

Current WHO phase of pandemic alert

CURRENT PHASE OF ALERT IN THE WHO GLOBAL INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS PLAN

[Pandemic preparedness](#)

In the 2009 revision of the phase descriptions, WHO has retained the use of a six-phased approach for easy incorporation of new recommendations and approaches into existing national preparedness and response plans. The grouping and description of pandemic phases have been revised to make them easier to understand, more precise, and based upon observable phenomena. Phases 1–3 correlate with preparedness, including capacity development and response planning activities, while Phases 4–6 clearly signal the need for response and mitigation efforts. Furthermore, periods after the first pandemic wave are elaborated to facilitate post pandemic recovery activities.



In nature, influenza viruses circulate continuously among animals, especially birds. Even though such viruses might theoretically develop into pandemic viruses, in **Phase 1** no viruses circulating among animals have been reported to cause infections in humans.

In **Phase 2** an animal influenza virus circulating among domesticated or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans, and is therefore considered a potential pandemic threat.

In **Phase 3**, an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people, but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks. Limited human-to-human transmission may occur under some circumstances, for example, when there is close contact between an infected person and an unprotected caregiver. However, limited transmission under such restricted circumstances does not indicate that the virus has gained the level of transmissibility among humans necessary to cause a pandemic.

Phase 4 is characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to cause "community-level outbreaks." The ability to cause sustained disease outbreaks in a community marks a significant upwards shift in the risk for a pandemic. Any country that suspects or has verified such an event should urgently consult with WHO so that the situation can be jointly assessed and a decision made by the affected country if implementation of a rapid pandemic containment operation is warranted. Phase 4 indicates a significant increase in risk of a pandemic but does not necessarily mean that a pandemic is a forgone conclusion.

Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

Phase 6, the pandemic phase, is characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in **Phase 5**. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way.

The statement from the North Dakota Health Department or the Public Health Officer confirms the local governments need to respond to the epidemic.

Department managers may send an employee to see a doctor if the employee displays the symptoms of the pandemic disease. The employee will not be allowed to return to work until a medical clearance is provided to the department manager. In the event medical facilities are overwhelmed and the employee is symptom free, the department manager may allow the employee to return to work without a doctor's note. Department managers and employees will follow the self-quarantine period which provides a recommendation of about how long people that are affected by the illness should stay home to prevent spreading the disease. The Public Health Department will provide these guidelines for the pandemic affecting the local population. Employees who feel they are experiencing symptoms of the pandemic disease will notify the department manager of their symptoms and seek a medical evaluation.

Family Medical Leave unless suspended by the federal government, does apply for the employee and eligible family members. Every eligible employee is allowed 12 weeks of continuous or intermittent documented Family Medical Leave. Every effort will be made to maintain an accurate intermittent accumulation of days.

In the event the county buildings are closed and only essential services are implemented the storm policy of providing one hour of compensation time for each hour worked does not apply. Essential employees will make every effort to report to work. Additionally nonessential employees may provide augmentation in support roles in order to maintain all county essential services. This may mean that some employees may be performing duties outside their normal scope of work.

Employees who are facing pandemic issues are encouraged to use the county Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for assistance in potentially stressful times.

Official travel may be reduced or temporarily restricted to help contain the spreading of the pandemic disease. Personal travel may be discouraged. Employees should be sensitive the possible complications that may arise when attempting to return home on time. Transient employees may become quarantined, ill, or confront a transit system with a greatly reduced schedule.

If departments are faced with an inability to meet their requirements, vacations and personal time requests may be disapproved, delayed or cancelled. This may apply to previously approved vacation or personal time requests.

In the event that staffing is reduced in our department of Finance and Tax, a current payroll may not include overtime or other adjustments due for that period. If staffing is greatly reduced the system will rerun the payroll from the last pay period. This will be for basic pay and will not duplicate overtime and other one-time adjustments. When staffing is able to process a normal payroll adjustments will be made to update each

employees pay record. Employees should be aware that as internet access becomes saturated the ability for banks to receive and send payroll information could be delayed.

In order to reduce the exposure to the disease some employees may be able to work at home. Department will give some consideration to what job skills can work at home and make the determination based on the situation as it evolves.

Internal and External Communication

Internal communications should function in a normal manner provided our IT personnel are able to address any major problems that may arise. External communications could become difficult. With proper authorization some essential work may have to be accomplished at home. However due to the possibility of many people being confined or ill at home, the internet and phone systems could become saturated. The results could be overloaded or very slow connections. This could complicate communication transmissions outside our county network to other agencies, such as banks etc.

Security

With reduced staff and law enforcement, hours that the public can access county buildings may be reduced. Any reduction of hours will be determined as the need arises.

Public and Media Relations

We will work with the Grand Forks City Information Office and the local media to provide information to the public where ever accessible. This could be issues on reduced County services to Public Service Announcements. Various County departments will have their enhancements to this policy as an attachment.