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Post-Tribune

Officials ready for medical emergency

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/1555084.ptgplan.article>)

May 2, 2009

By Charles M. Bartholomew

Post-Tribune correspondent

PORTAGE -- City officials have the outline of a plan to distribute vaccine in a drive-through, if the swine flu hits the area hard.

Mayor Olga Velazquez said the plan is one of the results of the formation of an emergency response team for natural and manmade disasters that was assembled last year as part of the region's response to a nationwide Homeland Security initiative.

Velazquez said the team had barely completed practicing a number of dry-run disaster scenarios, including a medical emergency, when the September storms and flooding hit Northwest Indiana.

"We practiced, because it's one thing to have everyone's responsibilities laid out on paper and another thing to have to carry them out," she said.

The Portage Fire Department was one of the agencies involved.

"We reviewed policies and procedures for things like what it would take to establish a dispensing point for anti-virals," said Fire Chief Bill Lundy, who is the mayor's designated representative to the planning council of Indiana Homeland Security District 1.

As mayor, Velazquez sits on the council.

"One of the things we took into consideration in the event of a pandemic is how to dispense medicines in an organized manner without bringing people together," she said.

Looking around for dispensary locations, planners looked first at the Community Center in Woodland Park," but judged that it would be difficult to store vaccine, set up facilities for medical teams and patients, and move traffic in and out in the available space, she said.

A better place, they decided, would be the North Shore Health Center clinic at Portage High School East, where there would be adequate maneuvering room for a drive-through.

"We would contact the schools about setting it up," Velazquez said.

Lundy said the Portage Township Schools are a signatory to the city emergency plan.

He said it would take about two hours to get supplies of vaccine here from Indianapolis, to where they would be brought from the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile.

According to the Centers for Disease Control Web page www.bt.cdc.gov/stockpile, medicines from the stockpile can be delivered for free distribution to the public to any state within 12 hours.

Velazquez echoed the advice of most experts on the most important first step in protecting yourself against any kind of influenza.

"Citizens need to know the best method is hand washing," she said.

She said all local response plans are co-ordinated with the National Incident Management System. More information is available at www.nimsonline.com.

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Post-Tribune

Disaster Recovery Center available

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/1555060.femabrf.article>)

May 2, 2009

Post-Tribune staff report

A mobile Disaster Recovery Center will be open through Sunday in Merrillville to serve residents and business owners who sustained losses or damage as a result of the severe storms and flooding March 8 to 14, according to state and federal disaster officials.

The center will be at the Ross Township Fire Department, 26 W. 73rd Ave. The center will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Applicants can meet face-to-face with disaster recovery specialists from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Small Business Administration and other agencies who will answer questions and provide recovery information.

Residents of the 13 Indiana counties designated eligible for federal and state disaster aid can visit any of the five DRCs located throughout the state. Designated counties are Allen, Carroll, DeKalb, Fulton, Jasper, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Noble, Pulaski, White and Whitley.

Disaster victims are urged to register for assistance before visiting a DRC. Residents and business owners may register online at www.disasterassistance.gov or by calling toll-free (800) 621-3362. The TTY number is (800) 462-7585 for those who are speech- or hearing-impaired. The FEMA registration/helpline numbers are operational every day from 6 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week.

Once applicants have registered, FEMA recovery specialists at the recovery centers can check the status of their application, answer questions about an application, or identify information FEMA needs to continue processing the application. Recovery specialists also can supply contact information for other programs that may be able to help.

Anyone not able to visit a DRC should call the SBA Customer Service Center from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday at (800) 659-2955 for information and assistance.

Victims may apply online at disasterloans.sba.gov/ela. Applicants also may visit the SBA Web site at www.sba.gov or by e-mailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.

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State adds 2 elementary students to flu list

Michael Schroeder
The Journal Gazette

Flu kit scam

Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller issued a warning Friday about a new scam that feeds on concerns about the flu outbreak.

Telephone solicitors reportedly have called Hoosiers in an effort to sell "mandatory swine flu kits," claiming the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security require their purchase.

Such claims are false and fraudulent, Zoeller said. No level of government is requiring the purchase of a safety kit for the current flu outbreak.

If you have been contacted by such a solicitor and have specific information, notify the Indiana Attorney General's Office at 1-800-382-5516 or online at www.indianaconsumer.com.

Three students in Indiana have now been diagnosed with what has been commonly called swine flu, up from one on Tuesday, state officials confirmed Friday afternoon.

The latest patients are two elementary school students from Indianapolis. Schools the students attend – IPS School 60 and Spring Mill Elementary School – will close beginning Monday as a precaution. The schools are scheduled to reopen the following Monday, May 11.

The students are at home and "they seem to be in good health," said John Althardt, spokesman for the Marion County Health Department. He didn't know of any other suspected cases at the schools or in the county.

While the schools are closed, they are expected to be cleaned thoroughly, Althardt said. All school activities have been canceled or postponed.

In all, more than 1,000 children were exposed to the virus. Parents will have to fill out a re-admittance form saying their child is not sick before the student can return to school.

There is no identified link between the two new patients, and neither child has traveled to Mexico or any other place with a person known to have the virus.

The previously confirmed case involved a Notre Dame student who hadn't traveled to Mexico and has since recovered.

State's response

So far, most samples sent to the Indiana Department of Health for testing have been negative for the virulent strain involved in the international outbreak. Only 6 percent have been sent to the CDC for further testing, state officials said.

Dr. Judy Monroe, state health commissioner, acknowledged 11 probable cases in the state based on current testing percentages. She said the state will begin its own confirmation testing next week.

Monroe called it "an extremely dynamic situation" and cautioned Hoosiers not to be alarmed but to follow advice on washing hands and staying home if symptoms arise such as fever, headache, sore throat, cough, body aches or fatigue.

She said all the cases continue to be mild but noted that it's a new virus. Doctors don't yet know the behavior of the strain, she said, and whether Americans have immunity to it.

Monroe said the incubation period for the virus is between two and seven days and that the viral "shedding" period – when people are contagious – occurs one to two days before symptoms appear.

Monroe said the state on Friday sent anti-viral medication for 230,000 people to Indiana counties, apportioned by population. A full list of how many each county will receive was not available.

In an online update posted at 11 a.m. Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tallied 141 people with the flu strain in the U.S. Those patients come from 19 states, including one in Ohio, two in Michigan, three in Illinois and one in Kentucky. That's up from a national tally of 109 people a day ago.

The one death reported was of a toddler in Texas.

Also Friday, the World Health Organization said that 13 countries have officially reported 367 people confirmed to have the influenza A (H1N1) infection, although many more are suspected.

In Mexico, the epicenter of the outbreak, H1N1 – a combination of human, swine and bird flu viruses – is suspected in the deaths of about 170 people.

Possible scenarios

Even as the number of confirmed infections grows, one Hoosier public health expert in Indianapolis sees evidence that the virus could run a more benign course than some anticipate.

But Dr. Stephen J. Jay, professor of medicine and public health at the Indiana University School of Medicine, reiterated that flu viruses are unpredictable. More data in coming weeks and months will make charting the strain's possible course a more reasonable proposition, he said.

The way Jay and some other experts see it, there are three possible scenarios: The outbreak could fizzle and the rate of infection stabilize; the virus's spread could continue at a rapid pace and become a pandemic; or it could fade away only to come back with a vengeance later.

The latter course has occurred with some other pandemics, including the 1918 flu pandemic, the worst in recorded history.

Jay sees more evidence for the first scenario.

The very thing that's contributing to its rapid spread – that it's seemingly easily coughed up – offers clues about its lethality, he explained.

The virus tends to attach to receptors in the upper-respiratory tract, causing mild illness. Other viruses that bind farther down in the lungs, such as the infamous bird flu, tend to cause more severe illness and more deaths, he said.

But Jay was careful to emphasize the theoretical nature of such assertions. The Mexico deaths are still being investigated, and much remains to be studied.

For now, "The virus, while easily transmissible, does not appear highly lethal," he said, adding he is "cautiously optimistic" about the future.

On the flip side, statistically speaking, "We're due for another pandemic," he said. "Viruses and living organisms fluctuate over long periods of time, ... like a series of waves or oceans."

Whatever happens, Jay and other experts, including Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization, said governments are more equipped to deal with a pandemic than at any other time in history.

Pre-emptive action

Jay said he thinks a good balance has been struck by health officials and others between alerting the public and inciting panic.

But some have questioned pre-emptive measures such as school closings in Wabash, where there were reports of flulike symptoms but not of the outbreak strain.

On Friday, DePauw University in Greencastle said six of eight students – relocated from their residences and isolated from the student population after exhibiting flu symptoms – have recovered and been returned to their campus residences. The two others have gone home to finish recovering and are expected back in class Monday, the school said.

"From all the information we've gathered, there is no evidence that these cases have any association with North American A (H1N1) flu – which is commonly referred to as swine flu," Dr. Scott Ripple, the school's medical director, said in a statement on its Web site.

"Because of the concerns worldwide over H1N1, we took extra precautions with our students in the name of safety."

Ripple said he had seen no other flu cases since Wednesday

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Saturday, May 02, 2009

Influenza being closely monitored

[By Barry Lewis](#)

Assistant Publisher

The Indiana Department of health, the Indiana Department of Homeland, the Montgomery Health Department and the Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency are all closely monitoring cases of the influenza a virus.

"It's too early to be classified as a pandemic, Joe Wainscott, Executive Director of Indiana Homeland Security, said. "Each of us can make a difference. Limiting contact with others can help slow the spread of the illness. Together we can help protect ourselves, our families and our communities. In most instances of the flu, those suffering can be cared for at home."

Dr. Carl Howland of the Montgomery County Health Department said staying calm and being prepared are both important at times like this.

We advise Hoosiers to stay calm and practice normal precautions to avoid influenza and other respiratory diseases," he said. "If you have milder symptoms of the influenza, we advise you to stay home and contact your health care provider for advice."

Howland also advises individuals ages 65 and over which chronic diseases and immune deficiencies are at a higher risk for severe complications, including pneumonia. If these individuals have not received the pneumococcal vaccine, they should discuss that with their physician.

Parents are also advised not to give aspirin to children with flu-like symptoms to alleviate fever as it can put them at risk for Reye 's syndrome - a potentially fatal disease.

Local and state officials want citizens to understand that the influenza can't be transmitted by food. This strain of influenza has not been identified in swine in Indiana or the United States. None of the American cases have been linked to contact with hogs or pork products.

As of Friday afternoon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the virus has been confirmed in eight more states. Confirmed cases have risen from 109 to 141, the CDC said, and it said the flu now is in 19 states, up from 11. Separately a few states reported slightly higher numbers.

The CDC also reported that the current strain lacks genes that made the 1918 pandemic strain so deadly. The 1918 flu epidemic claims between 40 and 50 millions lives globally.

CDC flu Chief Dr. Nancy Cox said "we do not see the markers for virulence that were seen in the 1918 virus. However we know that there is a great deal that we do not understand about

the virulence of the 1918 virus or other influenza viruses, so we are continuing to learn."

Swine Influenza and you

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

Are there human infections with swine flu in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm> CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are

spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes

nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

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What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water, or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care. In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not

want to be held

- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman in Wisconsin was hospitalized for pneumonia after being infected with swine flu and died 8 days later. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, New Jersey occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one death.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

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Attorney General warns of flu scam

Updated: May 1, 2009 05:16 PM EDT

Indianapolis - Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller is warning Hoosiers about a new scam that feeds on fears about the Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak.

Telephone solicitors reportedly have called Hoosiers in an effort to sell "mandatory swine flu kits," claiming that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are requiring their purchase.

Such claims are false and fraudulent. No level of government is requiring the purchase of a safety kit for the North American Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. Moreover, a medical diagnosis should be left to a medical professional.

"Not only are these telephone solicitors cynically exploiting people's fears in order to commit fraud, but they also may be violating Indiana's telephone privacy laws. Depending on who was contacted, this scam may violate Indiana's Do Not Call statute; and if an unauthorized prerecorded message is used, it would violate Indiana's Auto-Dialer statute as well. In either event, consumers who receive such calls should keep the number, if possible, so that our office can investigate," Zoeller said.

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is encouraging Hoosiers to maintain good hygiene practices, such as washing their hands often, and avoiding those who might be ill.

The Attorney General issued the consumer advisory today, after county emergency management agencies notified the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) of the fraudulent calls to businesses in their communities.

"In outbreak situations, scam artists are often ready to take advantage of public concern," Indiana Department of Homeland Security Executive Director Joe Wainscott said. "People should be especially alert for solicitors who speak on behalf of state and federal agencies."

If you have been contacted by such a solicitor and have specific information, notify the Indiana Attorney General's Office at 1-800-382-5516, or online at www.indianaconsumer.com.

The Attorney General and IDHS recommend that consumers consider the following when purchasing items over the telephone:

- Make a telephone purchase only when you have initiated the call. Never send money or give out your credit card or bank account number to unfamiliar companies.
- Don't be rushed into a snap decision. Legitimate businesses understand that you want more information about their company and are happy to comply. Never respond to an offer you don't understand thoroughly.
- Always check out unfamiliar companies with your local consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, the Office of the Indiana Attorney General, the National Fraud Information Center, or other watchdog groups.
- To reduce unwanted telephone solicitations, register for the [Indiana Do Not Call list](#).

As of Friday, three confirmed cases of Influenza A (H1N1) had been diagnosed in Indiana,

according to the Indiana State Department of Health.

Consumers with flu-related questions should click to <http://www.IN.gov/flu> for more information about the Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. For other questions, citizens can call the ISDH Influenza A (H1N1) information line toll-free at (877) 826-0011 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. seven days a week.

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May 1, 2009

Test for swine flu negative; hospitals prepared

By TAYA FLORES
tflores@jconline.com

Although two of the three samples sent to the Indiana State Department of Health to be tested for swine flu came back negative Thursday, hospital systems and county officials remained ready to deal with any cases that do arise.

"We are expecting to have a swine flu case in this county; it would be hard to (avoid) it at this point. But so far we haven't found one yet," said Dr. Michael Bohlin, Tippecanoe County's health officer.

He said he expects the test results for the third sample to arrive today. He wasn't sure about the total number of samples sent from the county to be tested.

The samples were sent following new protocols from the state health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rachel Meyer, spokeswoman for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, said the state has submitted about 30 samples from people within Indiana for testing at the CDC, but only one case has been confirmed as H1N1, or influenza A, one of several swine flu strains.

The county received a shipment Thursday afternoon of 10,000 to 15,000 antiviral drugs known as Tamiflu and Relenza, which will be stored as a backup in case local pharmacies run out of antiviral medications, Bohlin said.

Bohlin said the CDC recommends that the antivirals be used to treat patients with swine flu and not be used to prevent it.

"The medicine will prevent it, but you would end up treating people unnecessarily and we don't have enough of the drugs," he said. "Right now we have to save it for the people who get sick."

According to the CDC, there is no vaccine to protect humans from swine flu, and Bohlin said a vaccine would take a minimum of six to nine months to create.

'They are a vital part'

Ron Cripe, county health department administrator, said the antiviral drugs came from the strategic national stockpile and were shipped to Indianapolis and then dispersed to county health departments.

He said the county health department will receive from the state health department personal protection equipment, such as masks, gloves and gowns, some time next week.

The equipment will be used by safety personnel, such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical service staff, who are in contact with the general public.

"We want to make sure those people are very well taken care of because they are a vital part of the infrastructure," Cripe said.

Bohlin said Home, St. Elizabeth and Clarian Arnett hospitals are working on implementing safety precautions.

Those precautions, which will be implemented over the next several days, include asking patients with flu symptoms to wear masks and use separate waiting rooms.

Flu symptoms include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu have reported having a runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, according to the CDC.

Also, people who have a fever and other common flu symptoms are being asked not to come to the hospital for visits.

Vicky Snipes, director of emergency preparedness for St. Elizabeth Regional Health, said the hospital organization has seen an increase in people coming into the emergency rooms asking to be tested for swine flu and an increase in phone calls about it.

Consequently, its management team is meeting twice a day to manage the situation and increasing supplies and resources as needed, Snipes said.

In addition, staff is being monitored for flu symptoms.

Patients with respiratory illness are being separated into different areas within the emergency departments at both St. Elizabeth Medical Center and Home Hospital, said Lisa Decker, spokeswoman for St. Elizabeth Regional Health.

People are being asked to wear masks if they have flu symptoms, Snipes said.

Carrie Loudon, spokeswoman for Clarian Arnett Health, said the hospital system has prepped the switchboard operators with information about the swine flu to answer questions patients might have.

She declined to comment further, referring media calls to county officials.

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009

Health Department schedules food handler meetings

Because of public health concerns due to the Swine Flu (Influenza A (H1N1)/North American/Human) outbreak, the Brown County Health Department has scheduled several special meetings for local food handlers.

The meetings will be in the large meeting room of the County Government Building, located at 201 Locust Lane, on each of the following dates:

- Tonight, Thursday, April 30, at 7 p.m.
- Friday, May 1, at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Monday, May 4, at 9 a.m.

"The Health Department strongly encourages all food service managers and owners to attend," a news release from the department stated. "Therefore, please select one date to attend. The meeting should only be about an hour long. We will have a Registered Nurse available to talk about ways to avoid transmission, signs and symptoms and to answer any swine flu questions you may have."

For more information call the Health Department 988-2255.

State has toll-free hotline for flu questions

State officials have set up a toll-free hotline for questions on the North American Human Influenza A (H1N1).

The number is (877) 826-0011 and will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

State officials clarify name of Influenza A (H1N1) virus

According to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, the virus causing the current influenza outbreak is not a virus that normally infects pigs, but a combination of human, swine and bird viruses. The flu virus causing the current outbreak, now called Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human, has adapted itself to be easily transmitted from person-to-person.

Swine in the United States have not been and are not infected with this virus, IDHS said in a news release, adding that pork, when properly cooked, continues to be safe for consumption.

For more information, visit the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at www.H1N1.in.gov.

Purdue expert: Swine flu has no connection to today's pigs

No pigs have been found with swine flu (H1N1)—only humans—but pork producers need to take precautionary measures to protect their herds from being infected with any flu virus, said a Purdue University veterinarian.

"Flu viruses are named after the first animal they were found in," said Sandy Amass. "This particular strain just happened to be discovered in pigs in 1930, and this is the only reason it's called swine flu. We don't even know if the virus found in humans will infect pigs."

At this point, the new H1N1 virus has not been found in the U.S. pig population, said Amass, who

specializes in swine production medicine. Amass has three recommendations for pork producers:

- Do not permit people, including employees that have the flu or flu-like symptoms, in or around barns.
- Do not allow any visitors to the farm, especially international visitors who have had contact with other livestock.
- If pigs show flu symptoms—coughing, runny nose, fever and a reduction in feed intake—call a veterinarian and have them tested.

"It's important to make sure your biosecurity procedures are being followed," Amass said. "If you have any concern, work with your vet because they know your operation best."

Experts say consumers can eat pork with no flu concern

Shoppers should not shy away from pork products over concerns regarding reports of swine flu across the country, said Purdue University experts.

Purdue Extension nutrition specialist Melissa Maulding said the flu virus is not a food-borne pathogen, and there is no risk to the food supply.

"The flu is a virus that is transmitted through interaction with people," she said. "The biggest defense against catching the flu is to wash your hands."

Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have indicated that influenza is not passed through food.

Paul Ebner, assistant professor of animal sciences, said that while the current strain infecting humans is an H1N1 virus that is normally associated with pigs, it is not a classic swine virus.

"It has changed, obviously in a dramatic way that has allowed it to more easily infect humans," he said. "Previously there were a few occurrences of humans catching the flu from pigs, but this strain is different."

The Indiana Board of Animal Health confirms that this particular flu strain that is infecting humans has not been identified in Indiana's swine population.

Hog futures fell sharply Monday, April 27, after reports that confirmed cases of swine flu in humans increased over the weekend in the United States. U.S. grains and oilseed prices also fell over concerns that any reduction in pork consumption would result in less demand for feed products to produce that pork.

Purdue Extension economist Chris Hurt said the continuing economic impact on agriculture will depend on how the flu spreads through the human population and how the world responds.

"Swine flu will likely be an ongoing story over the next few weeks," he said. "We'll be watching to see whether other countries restrict pork imports, if the worlds' consumers reduce pork consumption and if the disease is significant enough to further jeopardize already fragile world economic growth."

Posted by Rodney at 3:05 PM

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Indiana prepares for possible flu pandemic

By **MATT THACKER**

Matt.Thacker@newsandtribune.com

April 30, 2009 01:41 pm

— About 200,000 units of antiviral medicine have been distributed to county health departments in Indiana, State Health Commissioner Dr. Judy Monroe said Wednesday.

The medicine is a precaution as state and local officials prepare for the worst-case scenario with the swine flu.

“We’re all in this together,” Monroe said. “This is something where we’re facing a new virus that has the potential to form a pandemic.”

The state’s first case of the swine flu was confirmed Monday night in a University of Notre Dame student.

“The good news is this particular student is doing fine and to my understanding is near fully recovered,” Monroe said.

Epidemiologists from the university are now looking at all of the people that student came in contact with, but so far, there have been no other cases reported in Indiana.

Monroe and Joe Wainscott, executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, held a press conference in the Clark County Government Building on Wednesday morning in front of local leaders and emergency responders.

As of Wednesday night, there were more than 90 confirmed cases in the United States, and 24 countries also had identified the virus. The virus, which has caused more than 160 deaths in Mexico, has not been as serious in the United States.

“Many of the people that are getting this infection have mild disease, so they feel like it’s regular influenza and they’re overcoming the disease,” Monroe said.

Health officials are now calling the virus — which has bird, pig and human material — North American influenza A. Monroe said swine are not ill. There have been concerns that the pork industry is hurting because people are afraid the meat is contaminated.

So far, doctors have had success because the virus is sensitive to two common antivirals — Tamiflu and Relenza. The problem is that officials do not know how the disease may evolve.

“We are taking it seriously because we know from past pandemics how quickly a virus could begin to spread,” she said. “It depends on how serious the illness is.

“We’ve had pandemics in the past that actually have had no disruption [to society] whatsoever.”

One possibility, Monroe said, is that the flu will fade away for the summer but come back in an even more powerful form in the winter. Federal officials are considering whether to focus resources on creating a vaccine for the swine flu that could be ready by fall.

State officials say participation from schools and employers will be key. Employers are being asked to not pressure anyone who is sick to go to work. The state may take even further measures to contain the virus.

“School closures is one of the ways of stopping the spread of this if necessary,” Monroe said. “Those are things the public may come to expect.”

Wainscott said the Department of Homeland Security opened its state emergency operations center Tuesday. The center — which opens during disasters and emergencies — will be used to assist in planning and collaboration with federal, state and local officials.

Wainscott said concerns about the avian flu have actually helped to prepare them for this flu outbreak.

“We have been planning, training and thinking through some of these scenarios for the last several years,” he said. “Many of the things we need to do are very similar.”

Wainscott also encouraged families to develop a family preparedness kit and plan in order to “have sufficient capability to take care of yourselves in the event that emergency services might be overwhelmed.”

“Being prepared at the home level is just as essential as being prepared at your city, county, state or federal level,” he said.

This week, the state government began sending medication to every county in the state on a per capita basis.

The antiviral medication was only being given to people who were sick, but is now being given out to people who have close contact with anyone who is sick.

All licensed professionals — including physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and veterinarians — are supposed to receive information this week regarding how to deal with the swine flu.

Clark County Health Officer Dr. Kevin Burke said he will be distributing a list of criteria to all physicians to make sure they know how to diagnose the flu.

Anyone with mild flu-like symptoms should stay home and call their physician to let them know of the symptoms. Anyone with more serious symptoms should go to see their physician.

The Center for Disease Control is telling anyone with influenza-like illness to stay home for seven days or, if the illness takes longer, until 24 hours after symptoms stop.

Health officials are recommending people regularly wash their hands, use hand sanitizers and even stop shaking hands. They also say to use a tissue or a sleeve to cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.

Symptoms include a fever of 100 degrees or greater, a headache, sore throat, cough, body ache and fatigue.

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Local agencies ready for swine flu

Posted: Apr 29, 2009 10:19 PM EDT Wednesday, April 29, 2009 10:19 PM EST



The Indiana Department of Homeland Security says they have instructed every county's emergency management department in the state to get ready for more confirmed cases of swine flu.

Michiana emergency service agencies all say they're ready to take on whatever may come in the future. They say they've been training for this day for years now. And they're hopeful that the public will have confidence in them to do their jobs.

"We've been talking about things like this for years. You hope they never happen," said St. Joseph County Emergency Management Director Luther Taylor.

But *it* did. The first confirmed swine flu case in the state of Indiana put emergency management services agencies to work. St. Joseph County Emergency Management Director Luther Taylor says his agency works closely with the Red Cross, the county health department and public safety agencies for clear a count of supplies, comprehensive planning, and easy communication.

"This is something we do on a monthly basis is sit down and train for things people aren't thinking anything about," said Taylor.

South Bend Fire Chief Howard Buchanon says he warned his firefighters of the virus' symptoms on Tuesday. As first responders, Buchanon says his paramedics are always concerned about hygiene for their patients and for themselves. But for now, they haven't changed their daily operations.

"All of our fire department is using the universal precautions. After they get done clean the cots sterilize and they take care of their hygiene as well," said South Bend Fire Department Chief Howard Buchanon.

Buchanon says they will await further instructions the Indiana Department of Homeland Security before they make any changes to their current procedures. And further instructions may come because there's very little information available about the virus right now.

"We don't know how this new virus will ultimately behave we hope that it continues to just be a mild disease and we'll be able to overcome this," said Indiana State Health Commissioner Dr. Judy Monroe.

But if our current understanding of the virus doesn't pan out, Taylor says all of the local agencies are ready to take the swine flu head on. "You train and you keep on training for the unknown. When it does happen you're not starting from scratch. The protocol is in place," said Taylor.

Local pharmacies are handing out these flyers from the CDC on easy ways to help stop the spread of any airborne virus. But most physicians say that wearing a face mask isn't necessary at this point. If you have more questions about the swine flu just dial 877-826-0011 Monday thru Friday from 8am until 5pm.

Reporter: [Nadia Crow](#)

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Swine flu: Cause for preparation, not for panic

It is disconcerting to see photos of empty stadiums, city parks and parking lots in what usually is bustling Mexico City, the epicenter of the swine flu epidemic. People who do venture out of their homes are likely to take the precaution of wearing a blue virus-screening mask.

Many thousands of Mexicans have been sickened. More than 150 have died. At the same time, dozens of generally mild cases of the swine flu strain have been diagnosed in the United States, including one at the University of Notre Dame. As of Wednesday, there had been one death from swine flu in the United States.

There have been two principal U.S. responses to this international outbreak: to help Mexico contain the rapidly spreading virus, and to achieve the necessary level of readiness here at home. Both responses have been carried out efficiently and effectively.

U.S. health officials have learned a lot since avian flu spread to humans 12 years ago. The fear of a pandemic then led to a vast and ineffective vaccination program, which caused a vaccine shortage for the human flu strain that followed the avian scare.

This time, declaration of a national emergency by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano was the right response, its purpose being to give local authorities access to federal assistance. Federal health officials have for years been stockpiling Tamiflu and Relenza, the two drugs that effectively treat flu. They have done a superb job of setting up a distribution network that ensures every state and locale can meet its needs. Local, state and federal health officials have been clear and helpful with their information and advice. They have headed off an overreaction at the same time they've made sure the American people are ready for the worst.

The hope, of course, is that the worst already has passed, and that this late-season flu strain will come and go without a lot of harm.

In the meantime, use common-sense preventive measures: Wash your hands frequently, keep your hands away from your nose and mouth, stay home if you feel ill and always cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze.

If you or a family member develop flu symptoms, call your doctor and follow the instructions you're given.

And be informed. The Indiana State Department of Health and the state Department of Homeland Security have created a Twitter profile to keep tweeters updated on flu news: twitter.com/ISDH_IDHS. The Web site for current information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Protection is: www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

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Local Officials Monitor Human Influenza A Outbreak



Local Officials Monitor Human Influenza A Outbreak

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) along with the Bartholomew County Health Department and Bartholomew County Emergency Management Agency are closely monitoring cases of influenza A (H1N1) virus infection, commonly known as swine flu, identified in the United States.

In addition to intensifying surveillance among flu sentinel physicians in the state, the ISDH has also sent information out to public health workers over the Indiana Health Alert Network and will share with physicians the interim guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The IDHS is urging public safety professionals, including paramedics, EMTs, police officers, firefighters, and emergency management workers, to take necessary precautions to safeguard their health as they interact and preserve the safety of the public.

“It’s too early to be classified as a pandemic,” said Joe Wainscott, Executive Director of IDHS. “Each of us can make a difference. Limiting contact with others can help slow the spread of illness. Together, we can help protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. In most instances of the flu, those suffering can be cared for at home. Be aware, plan ahead, and share with others what you have learned.”

“We advise Hoosiers to stay calm and practice normal precautions to avoid influenza and other respiratory diseases. If you have milder symptoms of influenza, we advise you to stay home and contact your health care provider for advice,” said Collis Mayfield, Environmental Director of the Bartholomew County Health Department.

“This is a novel human virus, which means we do not have a vaccine to prevent it,” said Mayfield. “Individuals aged 65 and older or those with chronic diseases and immune deficiencies are at higher risk for severe complications from influenza, including pneumonia. If these individuals have not received the pneumococcal vaccine, they should discuss with their physician getting the vaccine.”

The symptoms of influenza in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with this new strain of flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Follow basic precautionary measures to prevent the spread of a cold, influenza, or any infectious disease, including:

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, rather than your hands, if a tissue is not available.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

State officials have set up a toll free number at 877-826-0011 for questions about the new strain of the flu virus.

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Post-Tribune

State again shuts down Metro Center elevators

April 30, 2009
By Jon Seidel

Post-Tribune staff writer

GARY -- The Adam Benjamin Metro Center was once again without functioning elevators and escalators Wednesday after officials apparently moved too quickly to put them back in operation.

The state Department of Homeland Security shut them down two weeks ago after an inspection. All but one escalator were in operation again Monday, but none of the devices was moving Wednesday.

Rachel Meyer, a Homeland Security spokeswoman, confirmed that an inspector looked at the devices Tuesday and shut them down a second time.

Daryl Lampkins, general manager of Gary Public Transportation Corp., said some of the violations initially listed by the state hadn't been resolved.

"They noted some additional items that they hadn't noted on the first go-round," he said.

GPTC is primarily responsible for maintaining the Metro Center, but Lampkins said the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District is responsible for the elevator and escalator serving the South Shore Railroad platform.

NICTD spokesman John Parsons said his agency is waiting for the state to process new permits for the elevator and escalator there.

"They want to make sure that the permits are up to date," Parsons said.

Lampkins said GPTC is also grappling with a lack of updated permits for its machines. He said Wednesday afternoon that GPTC has paid the necessary fees. He also said the state gave approval to GPTC to run one of the escalators as long as proper repairs are made within 30 days.

However, GPTC's elevator is still down, meaning the building is not handicap accessible.

Lampkins said repairs have been made to the elevator, but state inspectors have not been available to look at it.

"It's a matter of trying to get them back out here," Lampkins said.

Contact Jon Seidel at 648-3068 or jseidel@post-trib.com.

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'Expect more cases,' state says

Michael Schroeder
The Journal Gazette

A flu pandemic is "imminent," Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization, said Wednesday. The biggest question, Chan posed, is how severe will the pandemic be?

As the number of confirmed swine flu cases mount – including the first confirmed death in the U.S. – Indiana's state health commissioner said more samples are being tested for the strain.

"We expect more cases," Dr. Judy Monroe said Wednesday during a stop in Fort Wayne.

The Fort Wayne-Allen County Department of Health has also sent some samples to the state for testing – it's making daily runs to deliver samples to the state for local health care providers. But John Silcox, a spokesman for the department, said he wouldn't consider those as suspect cases unless the state health department tested them and opted to forward the samples to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for additional testing.

Health officials wouldn't provide specifics on samples the state has sent. Monroe said the investigation continues into Indiana's sole confirmed case, which involves a Notre Dame student.

The state's Emergency Operations Center was activated Tuesday, said Joe Wainscott, executive director of Indiana Department of Homeland Security. The local Emergency Operations Center isn't fully activated, officials said, but it is circulating communications from the state.

Flanked Wednesday by numerous state and local health officials, Monroe urged caution. She is traveling the state to provide updates on "Influenza A (H1N1)/North American/Human" – the name state officials urged be used Wednesday.

But the CDC – the agency leading the charge to control the virus in the U.S. and directing state and local efforts – continues to use "swine flu" in disease updates. Updates online are posted at www.cdc.gov/swineflu/.

The virus causing the current outbreak is not a virus that typically infects pigs – there have been no confirmed cases of hogs being infected in the U.S. – but a combination of human, swine and bird viruses. Nor can it be contracted by eating pork, health officials repeated. Instead, it's spread person-to-person.

Stores are reporting increased sales of protective masks, Tamiflu and hand sanitizers, especially in areas with the highest concentrations of cases.

Local health officials aren't telling people to wear masks but that hasn't slowed demand.

W. Howard Bell, pharmacist owner of the Pharmacy of Canterbury on St. Joe Road, said phones have been ringing off the hook for Tamiflu. Protective masks are going "fast and furious" and alcohol-based hand gels were "selling like hotcakes."

Despite such demand, it remains uncertain how the outbreak will play out. Flu viruses are notoriously unpredictable, health experts say.

"We don't have a pandemic at this point, but we're trying to get in front of this," Monroe said Wednesday.

She emphasized that anyone who has flu symptoms should stay home and call the doctor.

Monroe said she doesn't know where the Notre Dame student contracted the H1N1 outbreak strain.

The student, who wasn't identified, had visited the Southwest several weeks before becoming symptomatic. But the timing of the trip is outside the normal incubation window, and health officials don't believe the disease was contracted there. The student did not travel to Mexico, either.

The student is recovering and "doing well," Monroe said. The student has been voluntarily isolated to prevent the spread of the disease.

Notre Dame said Wednesday that eight university students studying abroad in Mexico will return to the U.S. after the Mexican government canceled classes in all schools and universities until May 6.

The students will return to their hometowns, not to the school. Kathleen Opel, director of Notre Dame's Office of International Studies, said students have been asked to monitor themselves for flu-like symptoms for seven days.

The university is continuing with classes and final exams as scheduled despite the confirmed case.

But Monroe said if even a single case is confirmed involving a student at a high school or elementary school, where students are generally confined in smaller spaces, that school would be closed temporarily.

Businesses are trickier. Health experts say it's imperative that ill workers stay home. But no one is talking about forced closures that could further weaken companies struggling in a bad economy.

"We want to keep continuity of business," Monroe said.

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IN set up emergency operations center for swine flu

Posted: April 28, 2009 10:31 PM EDT

Updated: May 3, 2009 10:17 PM EDT

By Brandon Bartlett - [bio](#) | [email](#) | [Twitter](#)

Posted by Sarah Harlan - [email](#)

EVANSVILLE, IN (WFIE) - Health officials step up efforts to stop the swine flu outbreak from spreading.

There are more than 60 confirmed cases in the US, and now at least one case in Indiana, a Notre Dame student.

Authorities continue to gather information and resources to battle this baffling virus with a misleading name.

The CDC is saying Tuesday night, there is no evidence this virus is present in pigs in the US or anywhere in the world.

Pork producers want the name changed because you can't get the virus from eating pork. That, we do know. What health officials don't know Tuesday night, just what this virus will do next.

"This is unfolding a little differently than what our assumptions had been," Indiana Health Commissioner Dr. Judy Monroe said.

Monroe told the media and local officials to expect more cases of the swine flu, and even though no one with the virus has died in the US, that may change.

"Right now, we don't know the full behavior of what this virus will do," Monroe said. "It has some characteristics that obviously are concerning us that it could become a virus that causes a pandemic influenza."

There are two medications that will easily treat those who come in contact with the virus, but officials said Tuesday, if this strain mutates it could evolve into something much harsher.

"This is changing," Monroe said. "The main message here, we really need the public engaged to do all the preventative measures that we've asked, but this is a virus that we don't know how it might change."

And because the virus is now in Indiana, Tuesday, the Department of Homeland Security set up an emergency operations center.

"This is probably going to be a long-term operations, which is much different than our normal response," IN Homeland Security Director Wayne Scott said.

And response time is key when dealing with a new virus.

"We wanted to get to the media as quickly as possible," Monroe said.

Which is why Monroe was in town Tuesday. She said you at home are the first line of defense against this virus.

"During the 1918 influenza, it was already a pandemic, we do know the communities that practiced good measures had less impact," Monroe said.

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[Flu detected in South Bend](#)

By Cindy Bevington and The Associated Press

Wednesday, 29 April 2009 13:19

INDIANAPOLIS — One case of swine flu has been confirmed in a University of Notre Dame student in South Bend, the Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security reported Tuesday.

The student has since recovered, according to the university.

State epidemiologists are investigating how the young adult who tested positive for the virus became infected but hope to have answers within a few days, state health commissioner Judy Monroe said.

She said the person had not recently traveled to the flu's epicenter, Mexico, where the new flu strain is suspected of causing more than 150 deaths.

"We don't know if this individual perhaps had contact with someone who had recently traveled to Mexico — that's the investigation that has to take place," Monroe said, promising to "share detailed information" as it becomes available.

Notre Dame said in a statement that the student had sought treatment April 22 at the school's student health center and a culture sample was taken and sent to state health officials for analysis. Two days later, the school was notified that the virus may have been swine flu — a determination the CDC confirmed on Monday.

"The student has fully recovered and is in good health after suffering flu symptoms and becoming ill last week," the school's statement said.

Monroe said that to prevent the spread of the virus people should wash their hands frequently, sneeze into tissues that are immediately disposed of, and take other steps that would limit the spread of a virus.

The state also has set up a toll-free number for questions regarding the virus at (877) 826-0011. The line will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. More information will be provided as it becomes available, said Monroe.

"We want the public to know they should be concerned but not alarmed," Monroe said. "Follow all normal precautions to avoid the flu, including hand-washing and covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough. Also, please stay home from work or school if you're sick."

In the meantime, Notre Dame issued its own campuswide release about 4 p.m. Tuesday, notifying the student body that a student there had tested positive for swine flu. "The University is continuing normal operations; classes and final examinations continued as scheduled," the release said.

A link to the university Web site says that the student is fully recovered and in good health.

The ISDH and IDHS sent out a press release mid-morning Tuesday, saying the information came from the Centers for Disease Control, which tested samples sent to the CDC by the ISDH.

The initial release said only that the case was in "northern Indiana." Another release in mid-afternoon pinpointed it at Notre Dame.

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Carroll County Comet

If you are ill...stay home!

Residents are urged to be like scouts and get prepared

By **Debbie Lowe Staff writer**

Although it is called the "swine" flu in the national media, the current strain of influenza that has taken the lives of roughly 151 people in Mexico, is a combination of swine, avian and human flues. It is viral in nature and infects the nose, throat and lungs. It can lead to dangerous complications such as pneumonia or dehydration and can make chronic problems, such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease worse.

According to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), one case of the illness was confirmed in Indiana Tuesday. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security announced the state's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) became active at that time.

It was reported that 91 cases in the North American continent have been confirmed. U.S. residents were urged on Monday to not travel to Mexico because Mexico City seems to be ground zero for the malady.

Given there is no preventative vaccine available, international, national, state and local officials recommend prevention. The World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday containment of the situation is now the goal, given the illness has spread to Europe and other areas of the globe. The focus should be to minimize the effects of the flu, which it considers to be very close to be determined a "pandemic."

However, ISDH warned it is too early to be classified as a pandemic. Pandemic is defined by the WHO as "the global outbreak of influenza."

Carroll County Health Department nurse Hope Kinzer said all citizens should take the normal precautions, as they would with any other form of flu, to avoid contracting it. She said the incubation period for the new strain seems to be between one to three days.

Information in a handbook provided by the county health department for individuals and families called, "How You Can Be Prepared for a Flu Pandemic," directs citizens to take universal precautions to prevent contracting the flu. Precautions include washing hands frequently and avoiding contact with infected individuals.

Symptoms of the current form of flu are similar to those of other strains of flu. They include a cough, fever, fatigue, headache, sore throat, stuffy or runny nose and muscle aches, lethargy, lack of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

"Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze," Kinzer said. "Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve rather than your hands if a tissue is not available."

If a person displays symptoms, it is recommended they remain at home to avoid contaminating others. State officials noted the current flu virus is only spread from human-to-human and is highly contagious.

"We advise Hoosiers to stay calm and practice normal precautions to avoid influenza and other respiratory diseases," Indiana State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe M.D. said. "If you have milder symptoms of influenza, we advise you to stay home and contact your health care provider for advice. If symptoms become severe, such as high fever, trouble breathing, or inability to keep down fluids, seek medical care."

ISDH added parents should remember to not administer aspirin to young children with flu-like symptoms. She said parents should contact their health care provider for treatment advice.

In the event of a pandemic outbreak of the flu, Kinzer said the county will enact an emergency plan. Medication distribution "pods" will be established to allow infected individuals to obtain treatment drugs in a manner in which as to not come in contact with those in the community not infected.

"Emergency preparedness is essential," she said Tuesday.

Kinzer suggested families also prepare for a pandemic outbreak now by storing enough food (including pet food), one gallon of drinking water per family member and enough medical essentials and personal supplies and household goods for two weeks.

She said the health department will need volunteers to help establish distribution pods or locations and to transport medicines and other materials. To volunteer, contact Kinzer at the Carroll County Health Department at (765) 564-3420.

Kinzer said it is preferable to be proactive as a family and a community rather than reactive to what could become pandemic.

"People need to take responsibility to deal with this," she concluded. "This is a long-term situation. It is a marathon, not a sprint."

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April 29, 2009

State testing 30 cases for swine flu

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

A University of Notre Dame student became Indiana's first confirmed case of swine flu Tuesday, and the state is awaiting results from samples in about 30 suspected cases.

State Health Commissioner Dr. Judith Monroe asked anyone with flu symptoms to stay home.

"We do not have a pandemic. What we have is a new virus that has characteristics that could become pandemic," Monroe said. "This is a virus that we do expect to spread."

Notre Dame officials said the student, who had not traveled to Mexico, has fully recovered and that there were no cases of active swine flu on campus. Classes and final exams were to continue as scheduled at the South Bend campus.

The May 17 commencement ceremonies, for which President Barack Obama is the principal speaker, will take place as planned, university officials said.

Notre Dame officials declined to disclose where the student lived. School and state health officials will notify the student's close contacts who are most at risk of contracting the disease.

Although that student is the one confirmed case in Indiana, there could be more, given the approximately 30 other samples from across the state. A suspected case is one that tests positive for flu but is not a common strain.

"I suspect we're going to have a lot of testing that's going to be negative," Monroe said.

Still, she asked that people who experience symptoms consistent with the disease -- such as fever higher than 100 degrees, sore throat, aches and pains, and fatigue -- remain at home for seven days, or 24 hours after their symptoms abate, whichever is longer. The incubation period for the virus is two to seven days.

In addition, she advised people to practice good hand hygiene, carry sanitizer gel and refrain from close contact.

"I recommend starting today that Indiana stop shaking hands," Monroe said.

Instead, she said, people may bow or bump elbows in greeting.

Already, some in Indianapolis are not taking any chances.

On Tuesday, emergency rooms and doctors' offices fielded numerous phone calls and visits. The Marion County Health Department was so inundated with calls that a swine flu hotline was set up.

Wishard Health Services saw a marked increase in the number of patients visiting the hospital's emergency room and outpatient community health centers, said hospital spokesman Todd Harper. Most of those came not with symptoms but with questions.

Public health experts said that at this point, education is the main role in prevention.

"For Joe and Martha Hoosier, what should they do? The main thing is to educate themselves to the symptoms," said Gregory Steele, associate professor of epidemiology at Indiana University School of Medicine. "This is one of those pyramid-type schemes where you infect two people and those other two people go out and infect people."

The state has enough anti-viral medicine stockpiled to treat more than 800,000 people if necessary, Monroe said Tuesday.

Also Tuesday, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security said its emergency operations center had opened. The center will serve as a communications hub for the state, said Executive Director Joe Wainscott.

Doctors at Notre Dame's health services center picked up the case of the infected student as part of routine influenza surveillance. The Notre Dame center is one of 30 sites across the state that monitor flu year-round. Suspected cases go to the state laboratory.

State epidemiologists are investigating the student's case to determine whether the individual, who went to the university's health services April 22, had contact with someone who had been to Mexico or was ill.

On April 24, state lab experts told the university the sample did not look like common influenza and sent it to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta for analysis.

This week, Monroe asked health-care providers to be on the lookout for potential cases of the virus. Such samples now go to the CDC, but the state will be able perform tests here soon.

For a handful of local college students studying in Mexico, the safest course is the path home.

Butler University sophomore Kelly Jackson, who is spending the semester in the city of Puebla near Mexico City, originally planned to return May 25.

In an e-mail, the Greenfield student said she had not been taking the swine flu outbreak seriously until Monday, when the government suspended classes until May 6. Now Jackson is trying to leave next week.

"My reason for this is more for fear of not being able to re-enter the country in the future and less for fear of developing the flu," said Jackson, who has been wearing a mask when she goes out in public.

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Indiana health officials reassure residents about Swine flu

Posted: Apr 29, 2009 2:09 PM EDT Wednesday, April 29, 2009 2:09 PM

ESTUpdated: Apr 29, 2009 2:56 PM EDT Wednesday, April 29, 2009 2:56 PM EST



Dr. Judy Monroe

By Chris McGill - [bio](#) | [email](#)

Posted By Mike Dever - [email](#)

JEFFERSONVILLE, IN (WAVE) - Recently a Notre Dame student in northern Indiana was diagnosed with the new strain of the swine flu that's been affecting some people around the country. On Wednesday, Indiana health officials toured the state to inform and update residents on the status of the current outbreak.

The student that was infected is reportedly almost fully recovered from the illness and is now doing fine. However, Indiana Health Commissioner Dr. Judy Monroe says we still need be vigilant against the virus.

"We're all in this together," Monroe said. "We're facing a new virus that has the potential to form a pandemic. We don't know if this new virus will develop into a pandemic but we certainly see the potential."

The goal of the state visits was not to panic residents but to inform them on how to protect themselves from getting this potentially deadly form of Influenza.

Joe Wainscott, Executive Director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, had this advice.

"Develop a family preparedness plan. Develop a family preparedness kit. Talk through some issues with your family so that you know and understand that you have sufficient capability to take care of yourselves for a period of time."

Coincidentally, last week a number of health departments across southern Indiana conducted exercise drills within Clark County to practice dispensing medications to large groups of people. Clark County Health Officer Dr. Kevin Burke feels they are prepared if that need becomes a reality in Southern Indiana.

Dr. Monroe suggests that people wash their hands on a regular basis to help prevent them from getting the virus. She also says that hand sanitizers are good to use when you are away from a wash basin.

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Being prepared: Officials making sure they're ready for swine flu

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

By Nick Schneider, Assistant Editor

While the number of confirmed swine flu cases increased Tuesday in several areas of the country, Greene County, state and national health officials stress now is the time to prepare and remain calm.

The number of confirmed swine flu cases in the United States has jumped to 64, but officials said the heightened alert status nationwide is merely a precaution at this time.

The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) are closely monitoring human cases of the swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection identified in the United States.

"The first thing to remember is keep cool. Don't panic. Let the health officials panic," said Greene County Health Officer Dr. Fred Ridge, M.D. "We're getting prepared and we've been checking on the things going on. We know there is a case in northern Indiana, but we don't know where."

Dr. Ridge said he and other local officials, including representatives from the Greene County Health Department, the Greene County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and other health providers participated in at least one conference call Monday with State Department of Health officials to make preliminary plans to deal with a possible public health emergency caused by the swine flu outbreak.

There is also a local meeting of Greene County Crisis Management Council -- which is headed by Greene County Commissioner Bart Beard -- that will convene Thursday afternoon to further develop local contingency plans. The group includes representatives from local emergency medical services, healthcare, the hospital, county health department, ambulance service as well as law enforcement.

"We're being vigilant and we don't want to get caught by something bad and not be prepared," Ridge stressed. "After the Avian flu scare and the anthrax scare that we had and after we had 9/11, we've got all of these things in place that we didn't use to have. I'd rather be prepared and everything turn out to be mild and no problems than not be prepared and get blind-sided."

Ridge added, "What you are seeing now is the public health system activating and getting at a heightened alert -- getting all ready to go. If we have too, we have in place clinics and have had them set up for years. We have master plans. We are getting geared up for it. Fortunately, it's not here yet and hopefully it will never get here."

Dr. Ridge has also made a check of the local tamaflu medication that is available at local health facilities and retail outlets in the county.

Dr. Ridge said the current supply is low -- because the normal flu season is winding down and much of the supply has been used.

However, he pointed out that the CDC's Division of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is releasing one-quarter of its antiviral drugs, personal protective equipment, and respiratory protection devices to help states respond to the current outbreak.

"We have enough for what we need right now and then they (state officials) are sending us more by the end of the week," Dr. Ridge explained. "We'll certainly have enough at the local drugs stores to last until the end of the week, that is for sure.

"We are only treating people (with the teraflu) that have presumptive swine flu. The other thing that I feel comfortable about is this flu seems to be a mild flu. Unless we have an anagenic shift or some twitch, I'm pretty comfortable with that."

Dr. Ridge pointed out that the current outbreak is far from what would be termed a pandemic.

Mexico, where the number of deaths believed caused by swine flu rose on Monday to 152, is suspected to be the center of the outbreak.

"If you look at the deaths in Mexico, it's less than one percent. In normal pandemic flu in the United States 30,000 people die," he said. "If it hits us like it has in some of the other states, it will be very mild."

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred. Most commonly, these cases occur in persons with direct exposure to pigs, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The CDC said Tuesday there were 17 new cases in New York City, four more in Texas and three additional cases in California. That brings the total numbers of cases confirmed by federal officials to 45 in New York City, 10 in California, six in Texas, two in Kansas and one in Ohio.

State health officials in California have confirmed three other cases, and Indiana authorities have confirmed one of Notre Dame student.

The flu started in Mexico and has already spread to at least six countries besides Mexico, prompting World Health Organization (WHO) to raise its alert level on Monday but not call for travel bans or border closings.

WHO raised the alert level to Phase 4, meaning there is sustained human-to-human transmission causing outbreaks in at least one country. WHO's pandemic alert system was revised after bird

flu in Asia began to spread in 2004. Monday was the first time it has ever been raised above Phase 3.

"It's too early to be classified as a pandemic," said Joe Waincott, executive director of the IDHS.

But a U.S. health official said deaths were likely.

"I fully expect we will see deaths from this infection," as swine flu cases are investigated, said Richard Besser, acting director of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The symptoms of North American human influenza A (H1N1) are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

State health officials and Dr. Ridge noted swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food.

The swine influenza cannot be transmitted from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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A graphic with a dark blue background and a lighter blue wavy bottom edge. The text "LOCAL NEWS" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

US Declares Public Emergency for Swine Flu
Health Official: 'No Confirmed Indiana Cases'
By Joe Ulery
4/26/2009

There are no confirmed cases of swine influenza in Indiana. However, two possible cases have been sent to laboratories for testing and results are expected back early this week.

The United States has declared a public emergency in response to twenty cases that have been confirmed in California, Texas, New York, Kansas and Ohio.

Joe Wainscott, executive director of the Indiana State Department of Health, says it is too early to classify the outbreak as a pandemic. But officials admit the virus does hold the potential of growing into one.

Under the direction of Gov. Mitch Daniels, state and local agencies have been mobilized to monitor and respond to the outbreak.

State Health Commissioner Dr. Judith Monroe is asking Hoosiers to remain calm, but vigilant for symptoms of swine influenza, which are similar to the seasonal flu.

“Fever, headache, sore throat, cough, body aches, chills, nausea and vomiting have been associated with the swine flu,” Monroe said.

If you experience any of the symptoms, you should stay home and contact your personal physician.

Indiana has increased surveillance for the virus among health care providers.

“This is a novel human virus, which means we do not have a vaccine to prevent it,” Monroe said.

However, Indiana has 651,000 doses of antiviral medicine that is immediately available and more that is being delivered to states from the federal strategic stockpile.

Washing hands, covering your mouth and nose with a tissue during coughing and sneezing, and avoiding close contact with sick people are essential to avoid the virus.

State health officials say they are working closely with those on the federal level to monitor the outbreak.

If the virus continues spreading, social distancing may become necessary. However, Monroe says any decision to close public gathering areas would be in concert with experts.

Swine flu cannot be transmitted by food. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

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Lake James inferno cause elusive

Holly Abrams

The Journal Gazette

Nearly a week after a fire destroyed or damaged a string of homes along Lake James, investigators still don't know what caused the blaze – and say they may never know.

Neighbors, meanwhile, are still in shock and homeowners are grieving their losses.

The fire started at a home at 1900 Lane 105 and spread to eight homes and two garages just southwest of Pokagon State Park in northern Steuben County. The damage estimate is between \$6 million and \$8 million. No one was killed or seriously hurt.

One of the homes deemed a total loss was the year-round home of Stephen and Nancy Leininger. The couple had lived in the three-story home for about 15 years.

Nancy Leininger, 58, said they plan to rebuild.

"It's not the things, it's the memories that are attached to them," she said. Her cat of 17 years, Cali, died in the blaze.

The Leiningers had spent the weekend in Columbus, Ind., with family. Nancy's cell phone was ringing all night as neighbors tried calling to tell them of the fire.

"If we wouldn't have done that, we would have been caught in the fire," she said.

As rain saturated the charred remains of the homes Thursday, the one-lane road winding through the small lake community was busy. People from other lake communities and from Fort Wayne were driving through to look at the damage.

"There's a lot of sightseers," said Joseph Norris, who lives a few doors down from the destroyed homes.

Norris' 250-year-old red oak tree was cut down by firefighters after it caught fire. Hot embers also blew onto his roof and two boats, causing minor damage.

"Just in a little bit of time it was out of control and looking real bad," said Norris, 54, who has lived in his home year-round for about 10 years and was there the night of the fire. "You've got vinyl siding and wood siding – it's a recipe for disaster."

Stephen Koher, 68, who lives year-round on the lake with his wife, Rosalie, was home the night of the fire and gathered at the end of their dead-end road with neighbors – after firefighters evacuated the homes.

Since the fire, he too has seen his share of "tourists" drive through the quiet neighborhood.

"Every time a car goes by we look out the window – it doesn't happen that often," the 15-year resident said.

Firefighters have since cleared the scene, leaving it open to insurance investigators to examine.

"We may never know what caused the fire," said T.R. Hagerty, a spokesman for the Angola Fire Department. "There's too much damage as of right now to determine the cause of that fire."

Angola firefighters called the Indiana Department of Homeland Security to aid in the investigation. Rachel Meyer, a state Homeland Security spokeswoman, said her department usually helps smaller fire departments that typically have fewer resources.

"Due to destruction of the incident, no definite cause can be determined right now," Meyer said. "It doesn't look like they were able to rule anything out."

The investigation remains open and could stay so permanently if no evidence arises that would help pinpoint what caused the fire, she said. If insurance company investigators settle on a cause, that might affect the investigation, Meyer said.

Strong winds between 20 and 25 mph the night of the fire hampered firefighters, Hagerty said.

"The wind is what fed that fire and made it spread as fast as it did," he said. "We were against Mother Nature from the get-go."

The proximity of the homes also played a role in how quickly the fire spread, Hagerty added. The lots along Lake James are a mere 50 feet wide.

Steuben County Plan Commissioner Jonathan Ringel said he believes the homes that burned down were all in compliance with the most recent zoning regulations – which went into effect last August.

The old ordinance required a 5-foot setback between the homes.

That space has been widened, now including gutters and overhangs, he said. But the new ordinance applies only to homes built since its passage.

"Some of the houses there are not even 10 foot between," Hagerty said. "Sometimes there is just a sidewalk that runs between the two houses down to the lake."

With such a small easement, homeowners "use every foot that you can," Koher said.

Despite the fires, Ringel said, there are no plans to change the ordinance.

"I won't rule that out as a possibility if we have to look that far," he said, adding that officials might evaluate requirements for building materials. "Other than rendering the lots unbuildable, there is not more you can do."

Neighbors who saw the fire firsthand question whether additional resources, if available, could have aided in battling the blaze – including a dry hydrant and a fire boat.

"There is nothing more we could have used," Hagerty said. "Everything we did was to the best of our abilities that night. The access is horrible. There is one way in, one way out."

And that access isn't expected to change anytime soon.

The one-lane road butts up against Pokagon State Park.

On the other side of the homes is the lake.

"It's virtually impossible to put a two-lane road in here," Koher said.

Some homeowners who were spared the damage now realize how close they were to losing it all.

"I think people are thinking about their insurance," Koher said, adding that he is looking at his insurance plan to make sure his coverage is up-to-date.

For now, the residents say they will stay strong and return to what they enjoy best – summertime and boating.

"A fire like that you could never prepare for," Herman said. "I don't think it would affect the boating activity or the other people's use of their cottages. ... It's just going to be a strange feeling (this summer)."

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Post-Tribune

Gary man, 61, dies after returning to burning home

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/lake/1548907.qfire.article>)

April 29, 2009

By Lori Caldwell

Post-Tribune staff writer

GARY -- Nathaniel Irby and his longtime friend LaRue Rondo tried in vain to douse a fire that began Tuesday morning in the basement of their Tolleston home.

"The heat was so strong I caught on fire," Rondo, 62, said later.

The pair dumped some water on flames as they spread across the floor, then realized that wouldn't be adequate, and called for the fire department, Rondo said.

But Irby, 61, determined to retrieve some of his belongings, ventured back into the house, where he was overcome by smoke and flames.

He was pronounced dead from smoke inhalation at the scene about 9 a.m., Lake County Coroner Chief Deputy Jeff Wells said.

Irby, Rondo and four others were living in the brick bungalow at 1240 Ellsworth St., on the corner of Ellsworth and 13th Avenue. Part of the basement was divided into a living room and sleeping area.

Gary Fire Department Investigator Demetrious Mason said all six occupants of the home escaped the fire, but Irby returned.

Police believe he was trying to save some weapons, including two rifles and two swords they found inside the door. All were slightly charred.

Indiana State Fire Marshal investigator Jeff Roseboom said the fire appeared to be accidental. He said the cause could be electrical, owing to the number of extension cords running through the basement.

Rondo suffered minor injuries to his back and shoulder from the flames.

"I was on that couch," he said, pointing to the burned frame firefighters had tossed outside when they first arrived on the scene. As friends and relatives salvaged a few items from the house, Rondo sat in a car outside and shared his story.

"Where will I live? The Lord will take care of me," he said.

Contact Lori Caldwell at 881-3000, Ext. 3119 or lcaldwell@post-trib.com

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FEMA mobile disaster recovery center here until Sunday

By Times Staff | Thursday, April 30, 2009

The FEMA Mobile Disaster Recovery Center will be in the region through Sunday for homeowners impacted by last month's floods.

The center will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Ross Township Fire Department, 26 W. 73rd Ave. in Merrillville. Disaster food stamps will not be available.

President Obama last week declared Indiana a major disaster -- stemming from severe storms last month -- and ordered federal funds made available to several counties, including those in Northwest Indiana.

Obama's action made funds available to affected people in the following counties hit by storms, tornadoes and flooding between March 8 and 14: Allen, Carroll, DeKalb, Fulton, Jasper, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Noble, Pulaski, White and Whitley.

Among the available aid are grants for temporary housing and home repairs and low-cost loans for uninsured property losses. Federal funding also is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures.

Residents can call 1-800-621-FEMA to register or can register online at www.disasterassistance.gov.

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