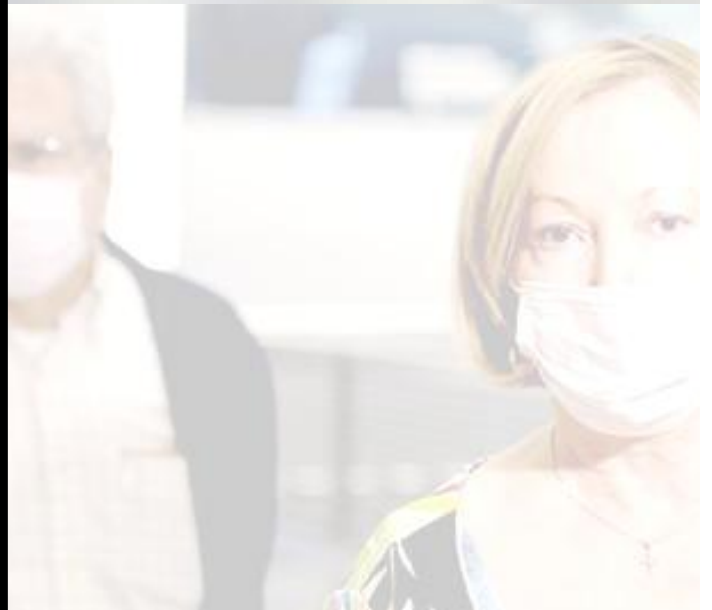
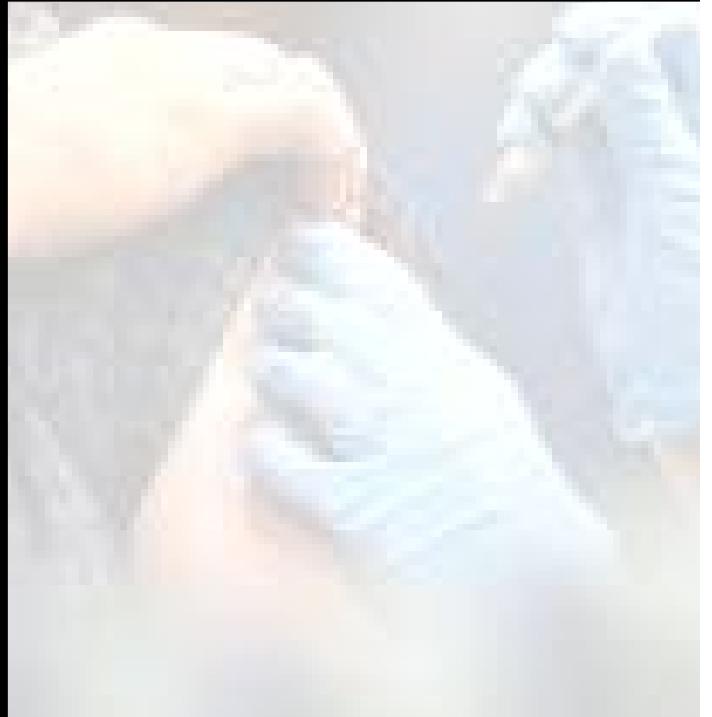


# H1N1 INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE STRATEGY

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Committed to the Protection and  
Preparedness of San Rafael



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# H1N1 Influenza

## Preparedness and Response Strategy

The current pandemic of the H1N1 Influenza virus, formerly known as “Swine Flu”, brings with it new challenges that we have not experienced as a nation in decades. We have already been impacted by the H1N1 virus, and while the initial outbreak proved to be brief with minimal disruption to our operations, we have been continually reminded that it can and may be worse.

It is possible that the flu conditions could become more severe. Knowing this, it is important to determine now how we will prepare and ultimately respond to this pandemic. It is our responsibility as a City to protect our workforce, our residents, and our community as a whole. Our actions and decisions will be mostly based on the recommendations and guidance of public health officials.

Our focus will be on education and awareness of universal healthcare precautions. These basic guidelines serve to better inform our staff and community on the things they can do to recognize flu symptoms and lessen exposure to others. In addition, we will strive to provide a safe and secure work environment for our staff that supports them in fulfilling their duties while protecting them from unnecessary exposure.

This preparedness and response strategy is a living document that will serve as a guide. It can and should be modified as needed. The City’s Emergency Management Committee is charged with implementing this strategy.

Our greatest resource is our workforce, our greatest asset is our community, doing the things that are necessary, when necessary, will serve to protect both and ultimately build a more resilient San Rafael.

Any questions regarding the information within this strategy can be directed to:

City of San Rafael  
Office of Emergency Services  
Attn: Emergency Services Manager  
1039 C Street  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
415/ 485-3111  
[oes@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:oes@cityofsanrafael.org)



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## A New Threat

Novel H1N1 (referred to originally as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people worldwide. This virus is spreading from person-to-person probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. With the virus’ rapid worldwide spread, the World Health Organization (WHO) on June 11, 2009, signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

Decisions will be based on the actual severity of the event, not the perception

On April 27, 2009, the first cases of H1N1 were reported in Marin County. Over the next days and weeks, the number of cases increased and resulted in the following in San Rafael:

- Closure of Bahia Vista Elementary School
- Closure of certain programs at Pickleweed Park Community Center – Afterschool Child Care Center, Kid’s Club program, Pickleweed Library
- Policy established that all children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult when entering Pickleweed Park Community Center

Throughout Marin County cases continued to be reported, yet the media attention surrounding H1N1 subsided, as well did the community’s heightened concern for the new virus. Society began to accept H1N1 as a new illness with mild effects and complacency soon set in. Since then, public health officials have watched and studied how H1N1 affected other parts of the world through their traditional flu seasons. Now, as we prepare to enter our normal flu season, the potential severity of the illness is being realized and prepared for.

There are still many unknowns surrounding H1N1 and ultimately how it will affect us all. The City of San Rafael, along with our partner organizations and agencies, is committed to preparing for and responding to this event in a manner that will most efficiently and effectively protect our residents, our employees, and our City as a whole.

While this is a public health event and the responsibility for guidance and information will come from local, State, and Federal public health agencies. We will work to ensure that collaboration is the standard for which we operate.

The workplace and other gathering places may act as a “point-of-spread,” where employees can easily spread or be exposed to the flu. The flu can have a major impact on our operations, causing workers to stay home because they are sick or because they need to care for sick family members. They may also need to stay home and take care of their children, if schools dismiss students or childcare programs close.

It’s still too early to decide what specific actions or precautions will need to be taken. Many of the actions will be based on the effects of the virus and the severity of its impact. Despite this, it is important that we have a strategy in place that will guide our City and provide us a framework from which we can plan and base decisions.

## This strategy is broken down into five components

- 1. Our Individual Responsibility (page 7)**  
The responsibility for reducing the spread of H1N1 lies with all of us.
- 2. Preparedness Measures (page 8)**  
As a City, we will make every reasonable effort to inform, educate, and protect our *workforce*.
- 3. Community Outreach (page 10)**  
We will work closely with all our partners and utilize all resources to ensure our community is informed.
- 4. Response Actions (page 11)**  
An efficient, effective, and collaborative response is required to protect our employees and community.
- 5. Collaboration (page 13)**  
We will be proactive and seek out those opportunities to work with our partners in preparedness and response activities.

## Our Individual Responsibility

We can protect ourselves and others by following these key action steps.

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation.
2. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
3. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes. Germs are spread this way.
4. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.
5. Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean, such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
6. Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If you need to use a co-workers' phone, desk, or other equipment, clean it before and after use.
7. Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, STAY HOME. Symptoms of flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit) or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. CDC recommends that sick workers stay home if they are sick with flu-like illness until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
8. Get vaccinated against seasonal flu, when vaccine is available. If you are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications you should receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes).

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## Preparedness Measures

Perhaps the most significant tool we have to combat the H1N1 Virus is awareness and education. Preparedness measures refer to the actions we take as a City to inform, educate, and protect *our workforce*.

### Education & Awareness

The responsibility to become informed lies with all of us. Yet as a City, we want our staff to have access to the most relevant information.

#### We will:

- Display educational posters (“potty posters”) in each City facility restroom in English as well as Spanish.
- Display informational flyers at all public service counters.
- Send one informational email to all staff advising of current situations and actions being taken.
- Advocate to local health officials for specific workforce information and precautions.
- Encourage an open environment where all staff with questions or concerns can bring those issues to their supervisor.

#### We may:

- Send monthly emails to all staff advising of current situation, recommended actions, and other relevant information.
- Update our Employee Emergency Information Hotline with event specific information and instructions.

### Supplies & Personal Protective Equipment

It is the responsibility of the City to provide a safe and clean working environment, as well as to provide the necessary protective equipment to those staff that may be at greater risk for exposure or the effects of the H1N1 virus.

#### We will:

- Provide alcohol based hand sanitizers at all public service counters.
- Provide tissues at all public service counters.
- Ensure that no-touch trash receptacles are located in all public areas.

#### We may:

- Provide alcohol based hand sanitizers in all work areas.

As a City, we will  
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- Provide tissues in all work areas.
- Make available surgical masks/respiratory protection at all public service counters.
- Equip all City vehicles with hand sanitizers, tissues, and other personal protective equipment, as needed.

## Community Outreach

Public health officials are responsible and will lead the efforts of community education and outreach. Nevertheless, our focus will be on supporting those efforts and ensuring that the messages reach all aspects of our community.

### We will:

- Distribute information via City sponsored newsletters as it becomes available (i.e. Snapshot, Fire, Police, OES, other).
- Email/provide information to the Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District for them to forward to their members.
- Email/provide information to our local private and public schools.
- Post press releases on City website home page
- Add a "widget" or "button" on City website home page for access to the latest CDC information.
- Support the County with their needs for information dissemination.

### We may:

- Utilize fire station sign boards to promote H1N1 awareness and information.
- Update our Public Emergency Information Hotline with current information and direct them to County hotline or other information resource.
- Display informational flyers at entrances of each facility.
- Participate in a County Joint Information Center (JIC), if requested and when established.

We will work closely with all our partners and utilize all our resources to ensure our community is informed

## Response Actions

It is essential that our communications remain open and proactive and that our decisions and actions are based on necessity rather than speculation. We will support and promote a collaborative response in order to:

1. Minimize disruption to our operations.
2. Protect employee's health and safety.
3. Limit the impact to the community, economy, and society.

### We will:

- Continually monitor the situation as it develops and make decisions based on the event and our strategy.
- Follow the guidance of our local public health officials.
- Constantly enforce the principle of employees staying home from work if they are sick.
- Ensure the routine cleaning of surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.
- Continually update our staff on all issues relevant to workplace practices and operations.

### We may:

- Create policies for flexible sick leave, worksites (e.g., telecommuting), and work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to promote social distancing if flu conditions become severe.
- Conduct active screening of employees when they arrive at work to ensure no active symptoms during the past 24 hours.
- Change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at *higher risk* for flu complications.
- Modify work schedules / patters to accommodate staff shortages.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to all staff or stockpile PPE in all work spaces
- Explore alternative methods of providing client/customer services to lessen the amount of personal/face-to-face contact.
- Prepare for employees to stay home from work and plan ways for essential operations to continue.
- Partner with other agencies to provide mutual staff support.

An efficient, effective, and collaborative response is required to protect our employees and community

- Close facilities, or portions of facilities, or alter programs based on the recommendations of local public health officials.
- Implement social distancing measures. To include,
  - § Cancelling of non-essential face-to-face meetings and trying conference calls or internet-based meetings instead.
  - § Cancelling non-essential travel.
  - § Spacing workers farther apart in the workplace.
  - § Allowing flexible work hours so fewer workers will be in the workplace at the same time.
  - § Offering telework options for employees.

## Collaboration

It is through a collaborative, cooperative, and unified approach that we will make the greatest effect on lessening the impact of the H1N1 virus. It is in the best interest of all agencies to attempt to prepare for and respond to the potential impacts of this pandemic collectively.

### We will:

- Reach out and stay engaged with County officials and other local agencies.
- Participate in Operational Area conference calls, as necessary.
- Maintain direct contact with County Department of Health & Human Services.
- Promote the distribution of information through the Marin Interagency Disaster Coalition (MIDC), reaching out to community based and faith based organizations as well as our local non-profit agencies.
- Work with the business community to ensure that their issues are addressed and that they remain informed and involved.

### We may:

- Develop a specific inter-City task force to discuss, recommend, and ultimately implement response and recovery measures.
- Provide support and services to the County or other affected agencies, if needed and as requested.

We will be proactive and seek those opportunities to work with our partners in preparedness and response activities