

H1N1 Update—Item #27 5/19/2009

- Good morning, Madam Chair, your Honorable Board. I am Dave Riley with the Health Care Agency. This morning I will be providing you with a brief update on the Agency's response to the H1N1 flu, also known as swine flu.
- As you will recall, a national emergency was declared on April 26 as the first cases of H1N1 were being reported nationally. Two days later, a state of emergency was declared in California in response to initial case reports in Imperial and San Diego counties.
- Chair Bates issued a Proclamation of Local Emergency on April 30th following the report of the first probable case here in the county. The proclamation was then ratified by your full Board on May 5th.
- The virus is spreading throughout the US and the world. As of this morning, there have been 5,123 cases reported nationally in 48 states with 203 hospitalizations and 5 deaths. 40 countries are reporting H1N1 for a total of 9,830 cases. This is only the "tip of the iceberg"; the actual incidence is undoubtedly many multiples higher.
- Here in Orange County we have 40 confirmed and probable cases with no deaths. California cases, including Orange County, been mild to moderate.
- Unlike seasonal flu, H1N1 is disproportionately affecting young people from 5-24 years of age. The average age people catching H1N1 is 15. There have been relatively few cases reported in older individuals. CDC and WHO studies to date indicate that the H1N1 virus has not mutated or become more virulent.
- The Health Care Agency has fielded more than 1500 calls from the public, businesses, and employees. Epidemiology staff have investigated 578 suspected case reports and the public health laboratory has conducted more than 400 flu virus tests. As of yesterday, our public health laboratory now has the capability to do confirmatory testing for H1N1 flu.

- For the first time, the Health Care Agency activated its Health Emergency Operations Center for a real event. This facility supported public health efforts, and coordinated operations and response activities. We would like to invite your Board members to tour this important facility.
- Operations Center staff oversaw the delivery of 25% of the Orange County share of the federal Strategic National Stockpile of antiviral medications (Tamiflu and Relenza), which includes more than 250,000 courses of Tamiflu. Operations center staff also arranged for the delivery of those antiviral medications to Orange County hospitals and community clinics in the event they were needed for treatment or prevention efforts.
- Because H1N1 was a new, or novel, flu virus not seen in humans previously, public health officials were uncertain how widespread the virus would become, and how serious or deadly the symptoms might be. Therefore, the public health community globally implemented aggressive control measures to reduce the spread of infection and protect the public's health.
- At this point in the response, thankfully, it appears that this novel H1N1 flu virus is behaving more like seasonal influenza with unique characteristics, producing mostly mild to moderate symptoms in those who become ill.
- Because of this, our efforts have returned to levels consistent with a seasonal influenza response. As with the Centers for Disease Control and the State Department of Public Health, our ongoing surveillance for H1N1 flu will continue to focus on identifying large clusters of ill persons and those experiencing more severe symptoms.
- The County Proclamation of Emergency was a prudent measure that was also enacted by adjacent Southern California counties. It gave the Health Care Agency flexibility in purchasing and procurement, the ability to request mutual aid, and gave the health officer appropriate authority to take actions necessary to control the spread of the H1N1 flu virus should it have been necessary.

- It also allowed us to track costs associated with the response for the possibility of state or federal reimbursement, as has been done in previous emergencies.
- Since the Health Care Agency's response efforts have returned to levels consistent with seasonal influenza, we are recommending that the proclamation of local emergency be discontinued at this time. While the local proclamation of emergency will not be in effect, the County will continue to be covered under the California State of emergency declaration.
- So, what's next? Well we are not "out of the woods" yet.
- The H1N1 virus continues to be a significant public health concern. We need to be prepared, and remain vigilant.
- Given the uncertainty of this new flu virus, it is difficult to speculate on what activity we are likely to see in the coming weeks and months. While we do not usually see much influenza activity in the summer months, public health experts fully expect this virus to return this fall with the next flu season.
- And, because there is no immunity to it in the population, and presently no vaccine available to protect against this strain of the flu virus, we must be prepared to respond should it return and be more serious.
- We will be conducting a review of our response efforts, and will be identifying areas where we can work to strengthen and improve our plans over the summer. Areas of focus will include: surveillance, anti-virals, and reviewing plans to publicize and distribute vaccines.
- We will be evaluating our resource needs to assure we have sufficient capacity in our epidemiology and public health laboratory programs. We will continue to work with the Centers for Disease Control and the California Department of Public Health.

- I would like to conclude with thanking all those who assisted the Health Care Agency with our response: the Sheriff's Emergency Management Bureau staff, most notably Vicki Osborn, Sheriff's deputies who assisted with security at our Operations Center, and the Fire Authority for its assistance with incident command.
- Lastly, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to your Board for your strong support of our emergency preparedness planning efforts.
- That concludes my presentation. Thank you.