

CREATING YOUR "DISASTER KIT" FOR A FLU PANDEMIC

It's important that each family or individual have a "disaster kit" made up before an emergency arises, especially since you may not have electricity, water, heat, phone service, or public transportation. Items to include are:

- ☑ bottled water in plastic containers (estimate one gallon, or 128 ounces of water per person/day; you may need more if you are caring for pets)
- ☑ non-perishable foods that don't require refrigeration or cooking like dried or canned fruit, meats and vegetables, boxed or canned juices, peanut butter, crackers, protein bars, trail mix, ready to eat soups with rice or noodles, powdered milk. Estimate a 14-day supply for each person or pet.
- ☑ first-aid supplies (bandages, tweezers, disposable thermometers, safety pins, rubber gloves, waterless soap, moist towelettes, over-the-counter items like aspirins, cough syrups, antacids; at least a two-week supply of prescription medications)
- ☑ household supplies (non-electric can opener, bedding and blankets, toilet paper, plastic eating utensils, books, magazines, aluminum foil, extra car keys, garbage bags, batteries, battery-operated radio, pens, pencils, paper, candles)
- ☑ tools (hammer, scissors, non-electric saw, wrench, shovel, smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, pliers, extra cell-phone batteries, compass, water-proof matches, plastic storage containers, flares, plastic sheeting, whistle, duct tape, signal flares, local map)
- ☑ clean clothing for each person for up to two weeks
- ☑ important papers - wills, advanced directives, insurance policies, passports, home-ownership records, immunization records, phone numbers, credit cards, social security cards - should be kept in the "disaster kit" in a water-tight container
- ☑ store infant formula, diapers, plastic bottles, powdered milk, and medication
- ☑ If you have a pet, store dry or canned foods, water, an airline pet carrier for each animal with ID (if appropriate), photo, vaccination record, special needs list and a muzzle/leash. **The Connecticut Humane Society at: 860-594-4502 has more information on emergency plans for pets.**
- ☑ if you use a motorized wheelchair or other battery-operated equipment, or require oxygen or equipment to assist with mobility or breathing, be sure to have additional batteries and medical supplies on hand or a manual wheelchair.
- ☑ *personal data—health information, pictures, phone numbers, scanned copies of prescriptions and records, etc., can be saved on a "flash" drive that can be transported easily and plugged into a computer at any location (available at office or computer supply stores).*

MORE . . . PERSONAL PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY

Events like those in New Orleans in 2005 showed how vital it is that individuals and families have an "emergency plan." This is very important if you, or someone you care for, is sick, elderly or requires special care due to a physical or mental disability. Also, you need to plan how you will care for your pets during an emergency. **This checklist can help you develop your plan.**

- ☑ an emergency communication plan: select an out-of-town contact each family member will check in with either by phone or email;
- ☑ a meeting place to come together away from your home, in case you can't go to your home during the emergency; preferably identify one in town and one out of town
- ☑ a full tank of gas in family car(s), a current bus and train schedule, and a charged cell phone;
- ☑ a current list of pharmacy phone numbers and medications taken by family members;
- ☑ ask your pharmacist or doctor about storing medicine for family members who are ill or elderly;
- ☑ a "disaster kit" for each person and pet in your family. (see page 5 for a detailed list of necessary supplies);
- ☑ cash or travelers checks and change;
- ☑ date food, water and medication; change the supplies every six to nine months

Your ability to react to a town-wide emergency like a flu pandemic, and to care for yourself and your family, will depend upon advance planning and preparation that includes time for practice. It's important that the plan include everyone you might be responsible for in the event of an emergency. Equally important is that all those involved practice the plan at least once a year.

CONTACT THE EAST HARTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT at: 528-4401 IF SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY REQUIRES LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT - ventilator, respirator, oxygen equipment, that must be stored. ***In the event of an emergency, always call: 9-1-1***



Being prepared can help when the unexpected happens . . .

This Guide is available in Spanish and English. Additional copies are located at Town Hall, area libraries, and local fire and police stations. Please keep it in your home in a secure and easy-to-reach place. The Guide is available on the Town website: <http://www.ci.east-hartford.ct.us> (PDF file)

Pandemic

EAST HARTFORD, Connecticut COMMUNITY EMERGENCY

Communities need to prepare for emerging, rapidly spreading diseases, including the threat of pandemic flu. Local governments and health agencies are preparing daily. Emergency Preparedness though, is also an **individual** responsibility. Each person and family should know what to expect during a pandemic and what actions to take in order to lessen the spread of disease. This Guide, the second in a planned series by the Department of Health and Social Services, highlights the common sense and best practice actions that you can take to prepare for a flu pandemic. Please retain this Guide in your home in a secure and easy to reach place.

- Baker Salsbury, MPH, MHSA, MSW
Director of East Hartford Health and Social Services



Non-Emergency East Hartford Public Safety Calls:
Police: 528-4401
Fire: 528-4401

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(2 of 4 in the Emergency Preparedness Series)

East Hartford's Emergency Operations Plan

In the event of a town-wide emergency, police, fire and other staff will be called to duty to help ensure public safety. Local public health, medical, hospital, transportation, school, and volunteer organizations will also be called upon to help. East Hartford Health and Social Services has also recruited and trained over 200 community volunteers to help out in the event of an emergency like pandemic flu, anthrax exposure, or a smallpox outbreak.

Area radio and TV stations will broadcast up to date information and instructions to residents on WTIC (1080 AM); WDRC (1360 AM) and Channel 5, East Hartford Community TV. The town's website will also have information. If you are asked to evacuate, these stations will have instructions on where to go and what to bring. In some cases you may be told to go to an emergency shelter, or to stay in your home or at your job site to limit your exposure. Town leaders will give you information so you can make the right decision.

East Hartford High School is the town's primary emergency shelter, with the Middle School and Langford Elementary School as secondary shelter locations.

A SPECIFIC CASE: PANDEMIC FLU

PANDEMIC FLU is a widespread outbreak of disease that occurs when a new flu virus appears that people have not been exposed to before. In a pandemic, the flu virus would spread across ("pan") continents, affecting a large part of the world. Typically, many more people than usual would be at risk of becoming ill. We have had three pandemics in the last century—including the 1918 Spanish Flu that killed up to 40 million people worldwide and more than 500,000 Americans. Two more recent outbreaks—1957 and 1968—were far less severe than the 1918 pandemic.

It's important to understand that "bird flu" primarily infects birds, not people. Currently, there are very few cases of people getting this form of flu as it requires that someone have direct contact with infected birds. What could trigger a pandemic would be if a new flu virus, perhaps a bird flu virus, mutates and begins to be transmitted easily from one person to another. This situation could result in a rapid spread of disease among humans in one part of the world who then infect other humans in various parts of the world.

A WORLDWIDE EMERGENCY

Pandemics are not the same as seasonal flu, the kind that comes every year and for which many people get vaccinations. This helps provide immunity to the virus and reduce the impact it can have on the community. If a new virus appears (a novel virus), however, **no vaccine will be available at the start of the pandemic** and it may take up to 6 months for it to be developed. That's why it's so important to be prepared in case such a public health emergency does occur.

A number of agencies are watching the situation to tell international and national health agencies about what is going on. Our federal government is working with drug makers to increase resources for research and to make new vaccines for U.S. residents. There is also a **Strategic National Stockpile** of anti-viral drugs which, while not as effective as a vaccine, could help people in the early stages of pandemic flu.

IMPACT OF PANDEMIC FLU ON EAST HARTFORD

WHILE a pandemic would effect our nation, local preparedness will be key to saving lives. A pandemic may come and go in waves, each of which could last for months and lead to high levels of illness and death. Daily activities would be disrupted, especially if workers and residents in towns and states across the country fall ill at the same time. Locally, disruptions could include:

- Business closings or reduced workforce hours
- Store inventory reductions, including food, clothing and supplies
- School and childcare center closings
- Public transportation interruptions, including buses and trains
- Limited access to banks, stores and restaurants
- Cancellations of civic meetings, worship services and social events
- Reduced government services (post office, public utilities, electricity, phone) and some town services, including Dial-a-Ride
- Closing of area hospitals, including emergency rooms
- Inability to provide services to special needs populations

TAKE ACTION

- **At Home:** Plan for service disruptions; think about those in your care who have special needs. If you require life-support equipment, contact the East Hartford Fire Department at: 528-4401. Prepare a plan for loved ones who are far away and keep adequate supplies of medicines, non-perishable food and drinking water.
- **At Work:** Find out if you can work from home. Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income if your employer closes or you are unable to work from home.
- **At School:** Plan home learning activities in case the schools are closed for an extended time. Keep computer batteries on hand. Plan recreational activities that can be done at home.
- **Travel:** Consider what you will do if you are unable to travel long distances or to go out at all.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO A PANDEMIC FLU OUTBREAK

Once a vaccine is developed, the first people who would receive it would be "first responders"- health care workers, police, fire, military personnel, and others who provide critical services. Until a vaccine becomes widely available, East Hartford's Director of Health will put in place community measures that are meant to slow or stop the spread of a disease. The two key public health measures are:

- Isolation/Quarantine; and
- Community Shielding



Isolation/Quarantine: In the event of an outbreak of Pandemic Flu, the Health Director has the authority to ask or order individuals or families showing symptoms of flu, or thought to be exposed to the virus, to stay in their homes or be cared for in a location in which will be set up for that purpose. Isolation and Quarantine were used very successfully in 2003 during the SARS outbreak in Toronto, Canada. Locally, residents ordered to stay in their homes will be supported by area and state health officials with medicines if necessary, as well as food and household items.

Community Shielding: In order to protect healthy people and reduce the risk of disease, the Health Director may ask healthy people to stay home or take "snow days" from work or school. This community shielding or "social distancing" is likely to go on for several weeks. Because the flu will spread quickly during a pandemic outbreak, it is best not to have people coming together at work sites, schools, or other public places or gatherings. While "doing nothing" might seem odd, it too has been shown to be a very effective way to slow the spread of disease, along with proper hygiene practices, especially handwashing.

Residents need to anticipate that community shielding will occur and make sure they have adequate supplies of food, water, medicines and other necessities. Healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended time, except children and pregnant women. Pets too could get by on less food than usual.

Summary: A severe pandemic could change the patterns of daily life for some time. While unpleasant to think about, it's important to know what to expect if a pandemic outbreak occurs. People may choose to stay home to keep away from others who might be sick. Some may need to stay home to care for ill family members. And, people may be asked or required to stay home if *community shielding* goes into effect. Things would not return to normal for a long time, at least several months. There would likely be a high number of people who fall ill. People who recover would have some immunity from the disease and they could be vital to a recovery effort. Adults need to plan to protect themselves, their children and pets as well as parents and older relatives who rely on them.