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## H1N1 Fact Sheet For Cleaning Professionals

*Excerpt from CleanLink.com: What industry professionals need to know about swine flu*

By Lisa Ridgely, Deputy Editor of Contracting Profits

### **What it is:**

The most common causes of human influenza are strains of type A; H1N1 is a scientific identification of a subtype of influenza virus A. These flu strains affect humans and are also found in birds and swine. Avian influenza, for instance, was H5N1 subtype. In most cases, the virus is passed between members of the same species, but type A H1N1 strains have the ability to be passed between species as well.

The current outbreak is caused by a strain that originated in swine. Though type A H1N1 strains affect both humans and animals and have the ability to be passed between species, only rarely do the bird and swine viruses affect humans. The strain now affecting humans is one of many variations of swine flu. Until 2005, the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) had reports averaging one human swine flu case every year or two; from 2005 until this past February, there were 12 total cases reported.

Public health experts at the CDC and World Health Organization are concerned about this flu virus strain because it's new — meaning humans do not have immunity to it and are therefore more susceptible to catching it and spreading it. Those most at risk to be sickened by flu viruses are the more vulnerable members of the population such as children, the elderly and those with suppressed immune systems. New viruses like H1N1 threaten young and middle aged healthy adults as well. These unique factors to H1N1 are what make a flu pandemic more likely with this strain.

Flu is spread person-to-person through coughing and sneezing of infected people. During a typical winter flu season, up to 40,000 Americans die from influenza. A pandemic flu outbreak — meaning, the novel flu strain spreads quickly and easily to all age groups and is more likely to cause severe illness in those who are exposed — could kill hundreds of thousands. Pandemic flu could affect 10 percent of the population at any given time, and effective vaccines could take up to six months to produce.

However, when it comes to cleaning to help fight the spread of influenza, the protocol should be no different than it would be for any strain of the flu virus.

### **The role of cleaning during a flu outbreak or pandemic:**

There are currently no special directives regarding cleaning to prevent the spread of H1N1. Survival times for influenza A particles on surfaces are: 8 to 12 hours on paper or cloth; 24 to 48 hours in ambient temperatures on non-porous surfaces such as doorknobs, counters, desks, etc.; up to 72 hours on wet surfaces.

Health care and cleaning professionals are to follow the same guidance as is used in flu epidemics: inoculations, isolation of infected people, use of protective gloves and splash protection, an elevated level of personal hygiene including frequent hand washing, management of infected waste and effective ventilation.

Cleaning during a flu pandemic consists of normal cleaning procedures with the use of detergent cleaners and disinfection with alcohol-based products that have type A influenza kill claim.

Frequently touched surfaces such as counters, doorknobs, light switches, elevator buttons, hand rails, railings, refrigerator door handles, sinks, coffee pots, vending equipment, computer keyboards and mice, and phones should be added to the routine cleaning schedule. Disinfection frequencies of touch points in high-traffic rooms and common areas should be increased to a minimum of three times daily. In office spaces such as desks and cubicles, disinfectant wipes and sprays should be used on surfaces. Disinfectant “bombs” that set off a dry disinfectant meant to cover

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every surface in an enclosed room are recommended for certain facilities such as schools. Some facilities may also want to consider equipping occupants with disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.

Janitorial workers should be trained on proper hand washing procedures and should wear gloves while working. Cleaning can help control the spread of virus, but prevention starts with occupants. Encourage proper hand washing, respiratory etiquette and proper tissue and waste disposal among building occupants and discourage presence when sick.

Every cleaning service provider should have a planned response to the declaration of pandemic flu that includes specified processes and requirements for each area cleaned. For example, restrooms should have adequate supplies of liquid or foam soap and disposable towels as well as signage directing occupants to help prevent spread of illness with proper hand washing techniques, and in break rooms and cafeterias, all reusable utensils, plates and cups as well as sponges and towels should be removed and replaced with disposables.

Service providers should also have contingency plans that include what they would do if an outbreak affected their own workforce and headquarters.

Distributors and manufacturers can help by educating customers about proper products and procedures to be used during pandemics, ensuring that customers are supplied with the right products, and providing informational materials to share with facility occupants such as signs and brochures.

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