

## Border Health Cooperation in Pandemic Flu Preparedness



We hope you enjoy this newsletter.  
This newsletter supported by:



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At the time of our newsletter publication, the World Health Organization had raised the pandemic alert level to Phase 6 based on the spread of the H1N1 virus. To keep up-to-date on this issue, please go to <http://www.who.int/en/>

State and provincial website updates are indicated on page 2 of this newsletter.



Gordon Macatee, Deputy Minister of Health Services and Mary Selecky, Secretary of the Washington State Department of Health

### Pacific Northwest Border Health Alliance (PNWBHA) underway!

The 2009 PNWBHA Workshop held in late May in Vancouver resulted in the critical first signatures from Washington and Oregon on the Memorandum of Understanding to create the Pacific Northwest Border Health Alliance. We hope additional signatures will come over the next months. The workshop also saw the signing of an *Operational Plan for Moving Emergency Medical Services Staff and Resources Across the Washington and British Columbia Border* by Gord Macatee DM BC Min Health Services and by Mary Selecky Secretary Washington State Department of Health. A highlight of the workshop was a 90 minute open discussion on H1N1 which ironically filled the void left by presenters unable to attend due to H1N1 pressures in their jurisdictions.

### PNWER's Center for Regional Disaster Resilience selected by U.S. DHS to assist Puget Sound stakeholders to develop a Comprehensive Community Bio-Event Resilience Plan

The year-long Pilot Project, sponsored by the Office of Health Affairs, DHS/Science and Technology Division, will assist the broader PNWER Region and DHS to develop a national bio-defense architecture by serving as a model for communities nation-wide to integrate the private sector, non-profits, and public institutions into preparedness planning for pandemics, bio-attacks and other major health hazards. A kick-off workshop for the project will be held in July. The project focuses on developing a holistic roadmap for community bio-event resilience that will encompass all aspects of preparedness and disaster management, including prevention, protection, response, recovery/longer term restoration, and risk-based mitigation to address communications, business and operational continuity, logistics, supply chains, and resource issues, public education/training, and exercises.



## Canadian influenza research network announced June 5th, 2009

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Canadian Federal Minister of Health, announced that the Government of Canada will fund \$10.8 million to support a national influenza research network focused on pandemic vaccine evaluation. The network will link over 80 scientists and 30 institutions to strengthen Canada's capacity to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of a pandemic influenza vaccine and vaccination programs and involve both private and public sectors.

## Joint FAO/WHO/OIE Statement on influenza A(H1N1) and the safety of pork (reissued May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

"In the ongoing spread of influenza A(H1N1), concerns about the possibility of this virus being found in pigs and the safety of pork and pork products have been raised. Influenza viruses are not known to be transmissible to people through eating processed pork or other food products derived from pigs. Heat treatments commonly used in cooking meat (e.g. 70°C/160°F core temperature) will readily inactivate any viruses potentially present in raw meat products. Pork and pork products, handled in accordance with good hygienic practices recommended by the WHO, Codex Alimentarius Commission and the OIE, will not be a source of infection. Authorities and consumers should ensure that meat from sick pigs or pigs found dead are not processed or used for human consumption under any circumstances."

## Pandemic Preparedness in the Pacific Northwest

The spread of the H1N1 flu virus, also known as Swine Flu, raises the question of how governments and public health have dealt with the pandemic. The states and provinces in the Pacific Northwest region have responded with a variety of strategies and appear to have coordinated well in response to the concern to ensure the public was well informed. This is an evolving issue and interested parties should get the most current information on the websites indicated in the tables below.

**Table 1.**  
H1N1 Flu Virus Websites  
for Each Province and  
State

<b>Alaska</b>	<a href="http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/">http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/</a>
<b>Alberta</b>	<a href="http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-H1N1.html">http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-H1N1.html</a>
<b>British Columbia</b>	<a href="http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2009HSERV0047-000936.htm">http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2009HSERV0047-000936.htm</a>
<b>Idaho</b>	<a href="http://www.panfluidaho.org/">http://www.panfluidaho.org/</a> <a href="http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/4344/default.aspx">http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/4344/default.aspx</a>
<b>Montana</b>	<a href="http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/swineflu/">http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/swineflu/</a>
<b>Oregon</b>	<a href="http://www.flu.oregon.gov/">http://www.flu.oregon.gov/</a>
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	<a href="http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-monitor">http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-monitor</a>
<b>Washington</b>	<a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu/default.htm">http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu/default.htm</a>
<b>Yukon</b>	<a href="http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/programs/nursing/health_officer/swine_influenza/">http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/programs/nursing/health_officer/swine_influenza/</a>

**Table 2.**  
Pandemic  
Preparedness Plans

<b>Alberta</b>	<a href="http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/pandemic-influenza-plan.html">http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/pandemic-influenza-plan.html</a>
<b>British Columbia</b>	<a href="http://www.gov.bc.ca/govt/attachments/managing_pandemic_influenza.pdf">http://www.gov.bc.ca/govt/attachments/managing_pandemic_influenza.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.gov.bc.ca/govt/attachments/Pandemic_Influenza_Consequence_Management_Plan.pdf">http://www.gov.bc.ca/govt/attachments/Pandemic_Influenza_Consequence_Management_Plan.pdf</a>
<b>Washington</b>	<a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov/panflu/plansummary.htm">http://www.doh.wa.gov/panflu/plansummary.htm</a>

- 1 KGW News, 5/8/09, [http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw\\_042609\\_health\\_oregon\\_swine\\_flu.113c1952d.html](http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw_042609_health_oregon_swine_flu.113c1952d.html)  
CBC, 4/30/09, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/04/30/bc-five-new-swine-flu-cases-confirmed.html>
- 2 State of Alaska, 5/5/09, [http://www.hss.state.ak.us/press/2009/H1N1school\\_os\\_050509.pdf](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/press/2009/H1N1school_os_050509.pdf)
- 3 CBC, 4/27/09, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2009/04/27/montreal-migrantworkers-swine-0427.html>

Closing schools was an action taken in some areas to deter the spread of the H1N1 virus. Though U.S. schools in Washington and Oregon closed in greater numbers, British Columbia also closed a school; this occurred when school officials worried students with confirmed cases could infect others.<sup>1</sup> State Departments of Health, guided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), recommended temporary school closures if any “recognized” cases appeared at the beginning of the outbreak. States have now issued the general recommendation that sick students or teachers stay home, instead of closing down the entire school.<sup>2</sup>

Canada issued new guidelines for increased monitoring of Mexican workers before coming to work in Canada.<sup>3</sup> Some worry about the impact of restrictions on the economy as 3,000 temporary workers come to British Columbia alone each year to help pick fruit or vegetables.<sup>4</sup> While not imposing any direct regulations, U.S. states have also taken precautions against migrant workers. For example, Alaska published a document that advises employers of migrant workers that workers may be reluctant to report illness.<sup>5</sup> This guide, published by the Department of Health and Social Services, asks employers to isolate sick workers, but to avoid potential stigmatization. Specific documents for healthcare officials have been issued. The Washington State Department of Health issued an “Interim Guidance for Medical Examiners” that requests that all unexplained deaths due to respiratory problems be reported and bodies be tested for the H1N1 virus.<sup>6</sup> Saskatchewan issued an information sheet called “Infection Control in Physician Offices and Primary Care Settings.”<sup>7</sup> It recommends that everyone passing through the facility should be screened for respiratory and fever symptoms. King County in Washington State took a creative approach to spread information about pandemics to harder-to-reach audiences. It produced a comic book which tells the story of the 1918 pandemic and suggests ways to prepare for a pandemic.<sup>8</sup> This publication, in 16 different languages, reaches out to immigrants, particularly those who are less likely to seek healthcare.<sup>9</sup>

Next Newsletter: *July 2009: Health Evidence to Guide Decision Making*: in association with PNWER Health Care Working Group meeting – at the annual PNWER conference in Boise, Idaho. [www.pnwer.org](http://www.pnwer.org).

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- 1 KGW News, 5/8/09, [http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw\\_042609\\_health\\_oregon\\_swine\\_flu.113c1952d.html](http://www.kgw.com/news-local/stories/kgw_042609_health_oregon_swine_flu.113c1952d.html)
  - CBC, 4/30/09, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/04/30/bc-five-new-swine-flu-cases-confirmed.html>
  - 2 State of Alaska, 5/5/09, [http://www.hss.state.ak.us/press/2009/H1N1school\\_os\\_050509.pdf](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/press/2009/H1N1school_os_050509.pdf)
  - 3 CBC, 4/27/09, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2009/04/27/montreal-migrantworkers-swine-0427.html>
  - 4 The Province, 4/27/09, <http://www.theprovince.com/Cars/Mexican+orchard+workers+will+tested+before+coming/1539672/story.html>
  - 5 State of Alaska, 5/8/09, <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/PDFs/EmployerGuidance.pdf>
  - 6 State of Washington DOH, 5/6/09, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/CD/swineflu/sfluresources.htm>
  - 7 Saskatchewan Ministry of Health, 4/29/09, <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/infection-control-primary-care>
  - 8 Public Health: Seattle & King County, <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/pandemicflu/comicbook.aspx>
  - 9 The Seattle Times, 7/24/08, [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2008069640\\_comic24m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2008069640_comic24m.html)