



**WHITEPAPER**

**OSHA Pandemic Guidance  
for Healthcare Workers**

**Updated: June 2009**

## Summary – OSHA Pandemic Guidance for Healthcare Workers

*The bulletin is a summary prepared by Sperian Respiratory Protection USA of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers as stated by OSHA. The information contained in this brief is meant to be a summary and is not intended to be comprehensive or take the place of the OSHA Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers guidance document. Please read the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers guidance document. for a complete understanding. This document can be found at [http://osha.gov/Publications/OSHA\\_pandemic\\_health.pdf](http://osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_pandemic_health.pdf)*

### Background/History

In May 2007 OSHA released a new and comprehensive safety and health guidance document titled Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers. With the recent H1N1 pandemic event in 2009, OSHA has updated current guidelines. This guidance allows healthcare facilities, such as, hospitals, chronic care facilities, outpatient clinics, medical offices, dental offices, schools, etc. a preparedness guideline to follow for any possible Influenza pandemics.

The entire document can be found at [http://osha.gov/Publications/OSHA\\_pandemic\\_health.pdf](http://osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_pandemic_health.pdf)

### Influenza Modes of Transportation

There are three types of Influenza transportation.

#### 1. Droplet Transmission

- Droplets are produced by coughing, sneezing, talking, or by therapeutic manipulations such as suctioning or bronchoscopy.
- Infected droplets may enter the susceptible individual through the conjunctiva of the eye or the mucus membranes of the mouth or nose.
- If there is 3 feet of distance or less, it is necessary to wear a NIOSH-certified N95 or higher respirator.

#### 2. Airborne Transmission

- Airborne transmission, as occurs in tuberculosis, is spread through small infectious particles such as droplet nuclei. These very small airborne droplet nuclei can be readily disseminated by air currents to susceptible individuals.
- They can travel significant distances and can penetrate deep into the lung to the alveoli where they can establish an infection.

#### 3. Contact Transmission

- Direct contact transmission occurs by touching skin to skin, usually during direct patient care activities such as turning or bathing patients, or by shaking hands
- Indirect transmission occurs when infected material from the patient is deposited in the environment and is taken up by a susceptible individual.

More information on Droplet Transmission can be found in the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers, Modes of Transmission (pg. 11-12)

## Respiratory Protection

Respiratory protection requires the use of a NIOSH-certified N95 or higher respirator and implementation of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that considers the following:

- When both fluid protection (e.g., blood splashes) and respiratory protection are needed, use a “surgical N95” respirator that has been certified by NIOSH and cleared by the FDA. Healthcare workers transporting patients should use a respirator (N95 or higher).
  - Sperian Healthcare ONE-Fit N95 Particulate Respirator and Surgical Mask
    - HC-NB295F      Flat Fold
    - HC-NB095      Molded Cup
- Consider elastomeric respirators for essential employees who may have to decontaminate and reuse respirators in the event that there is a shortage of disposable respirators.
  - The entire product line of reusable respirators from Sperian Respiratory Protection using N95, N99 or P100 Filters.
    - Half Masks to be use with separate eye protection.
    - Full Face respirators can be used for addition protection of the eyes from airborne particles and fluids.
- Consider powered air-purifying respirators for essential employees who may have to decontaminate and reuse respirators, wear respirators for prolonged periods of time, be exposed to high-risk procedures (e.g., bronchoscopy), or work in high-risk environments.
  - PAPR solutions from Sperian Respiratory Protection
    - Opti-Fit Face Mounted PAPR w/HEPA filter
    - Opti-Fit Belt Mounted PAPR w/HEPA filter

More information on Respiratory Protection can be found in the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers, Respiratory Protection for Pandemic Influenza (pg.27-31)

## Special Considerations for Pandemic Preparedness

- If employers prepare appropriately, respiratory protection against pandemic influenza will be more effective.
- Acquiring adequate supplies of appropriate respirators, ensuring that they fit key personnel, conducting appropriate training, and performing other aspects of respiratory protection can be accomplished in advance of a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- These measures should be repeated annually, prior to a pandemic being declared, to assure continued preparedness.
- Respirators must be fit tested by wearers in accordance with a respiratory protection program.
- **Surgical masks are not considered adequate respiratory protection for airborne transmission of pandemic influenza. *When both fluid protection (e.g., blood splashes) and respiratory protection are needed, a “surgical N95” respirator should be used.***

More information on Special Considerations for Pandemic Preparedness can be found in the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers, Special Considerations for Pandemic Preparedness (pg.30-31)

## Stockpiling Essential Resources

An issue that all healthcare facilities must address as part of pandemic planning is stockpiling resources. Due to logistic and economic concerns, this element of disaster planning is often neglected.

Given that pandemic influenza vaccines will likely not be available until 4 to 6 months into the pandemic and shortages of antiviral medications are anticipated, **PPE will be especially important for protecting healthcare workers.**

HHS/CDC suggests stockpiling the following PPE resources:

- Disposable N95 respirators, surgical masks (or N95 Respirator and surgical mask)
- Face shields (disposable or reusable)
- Gowns

More information on Stockpiling can be found in the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers, Stockpiles of Essential Resources (pg.44-47)

## Respiratory Protection Programs

The OSHA Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134) requires employers to establish and maintain a respiratory protection program to protect their respirator-wearing employees.

A respiratory protection program is a cohesive collection of worksite-specific procedures and policies that addresses all respiratory protection elements required by the standard.

More information on Respiratory Protection Programs can be found in the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers, Respiratory Programs (pg.62-66)

### Sample – Epidemic Respiratory Infection Management Protocol (ERI)

Sample Protocol and Respiratory Infection plans can be found in the *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers*, ERI Protocol, pg. (77-93)

*This document is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. Likewise, it cannot and does not diminish any obligations established by Federal or state statute, rule or standard. The document is advisory in nature, informational in content, and is intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to comply with hazard-specific safety and health standards. In addition, pursuant to Section 5(a)(1), the General Duty Clause of the Act, employers must provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Employers can be cited for violating the General Duty Clause if there is a recognized hazard and they do not take reasonable steps to prevent or abate the hazard.*

For a respiratory program that will comply with OSHA standards and with your business, contact your Sperian sales representative.