



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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To: Virginia EMS Providers and First Responders

From: The Virginia Office of EMS

RE: Swine Flu

Today the State Health Commissioner declared a Public Health Emergency in the Commonwealth to assist with the coordination and information dissemination associated with the swine flu outbreak. As part of this effort the Office of EMS is working to ensure that all EMS providers have access to the latest information and resources for health care providers related to this outbreak.

As someone who is on the front line, it is likely that you may come into contact with patients with flu-like symptoms or are worried about becoming infected with the flu. Your understanding of the swine flu and proper infection control can help protect you and your crew.

We want all providers to remember the old saying, "I'm safe, scene safe," especially the I'm safe part. We encourage all agencies to review infection control protocol and review their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP).

Please remember that this event is rapidly changing and evolving and we recommend frequently checking the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov/swineflu and the OEMS Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems for updates, more information about swine flu, CDC guidelines on infection control and more.

The swine flu is similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu which include, cough, fever, sore throat, nasal congestion and rhinorrhea. Additional symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, headache, chills, fatigue, dyspnea, pneumonia and respiratory failure. Persons with swine flu are contagious for up to seven days after the onset of illness and possibly longer if symptomatic.

If you have a patient who may have some of these symptoms and you suspect it is the flu, we recommend the following:

- Immediately place mask on patient, wear personal protective equipment during contact with the patient (i.e. gloves, goggles and a N-95 respirator if you cannot mask the patient)
- Notify the receiving hospital, so that the masked patient may be directed immediately to a waiting exam room

- Create negative pressure in the ambulance by opening windows
- Use infection control protocols when cleaning the ambulance or any vehicle the patient may have been transported in
- If you get sick, don't go to work, and be sure to call your doctor.

You can be part of the solution! Fliers and posters are available on the CDC Web site on cover your cough and other ways to help stop the spread the germs. These can be easily printed and handed out to people in your community. Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm> to print the posters and fliers.

As information changes or resources become available, the Office of EMS will update our Web site and forward information through our e-mail news updates. We also ask that you please forward this and future messages to your agency members and network of providers.

Be aware and be safe!