

H1N1 Texas Conference Call – 11/04/09
10 am – total time of call: 39 minutes

Texas Governor’s Division of Emergency Management:

Apologies were given for the technical difficulties that many had during the H1N1 Statewide Teleconference Call this past week.

These H1N1 teleconference calls will continue until they are no longer required

Texas Department of State Health Services:

H1N1 Influenza is still Widespread throughout Texas, as it is in the United States. 99% of all Flu is reported as Type A, H1N1 in the United States. The symptoms are still mild to moderate, except for those with underlying health conditions. 48 states report increased H1N1 activity, with steeply increased hospital visits. This H1N1 peak is now higher than what is the usual peak for the regular flu season.

113 deaths, 19 in the past week, in Texas so far due to H1N1, during this latest round of illness. In total there have been 24 pediatric deaths in Texas so far.

Continue to see <http://www.texasflu.org> for clinical guidance on those recommended for emergency treatment. This website is also the main communication tool from DSHS about the H1N1 Influenza Outbreak.

We are still seeing mild to moderate disease with H1N1, with the same elevated risk groups as before: very young, very old, pregnant, or other underlying condition. Severe illness is still possible, even with otherwise healthy individuals, though.

DSHS/CDC recommendation remains the same for time away for ill persons: people with flu should remain at home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone, without taking fever reducing recommendations. Healthcare worker recommendations are longer, up to 7 days delay in returning to work. All are reminded to use proper hygiene methods and to utilize proper cough etiquette. Refrain from the use of aspirin as a fever reducer, especially in children.

TX has ordered their total allotment of the H1N1 vaccine, but not all of this is coming in to the state. The same recommendations apply for vaccine administration – medical staff and other healthcare workers will be the first priority to receive the vaccinations. It is likely to be late November before the H1N1 vaccine is available widely, and in vaccination clinics throughout Texas. Currently, Texas gets 7.9% of the total national allotment of H1N1 vaccines. The CDC and DSHS still recommends that all get the H1N1 vaccination when this is available.

Treatment with antiviral medication is recommended for those at higher risk of serious impact (very young, elderly, those with various underlying conditions, and pregnant women), and not as a preventive measure for otherwise healthy individuals. Given this, antiviral medications have been distributed to pharmacies across the state, including major retail stores. Pediatric doses are

available, but compounding by the pharmacies is encouraged to increase the availability of this dosage. The FDA has authorized the use of lots of Tamiflu and other antiviral medicines that are expiring or have recently expired. This is in light on the shortages, and of the federal disaster declaration. This approval of this has also passed through the drug manufacturing companies.

The state lab will still test only for the case of hospitalized individuals, for those at high risk of disease, and for outbreak tracking.

Still nothing is seen in the way of antiviral resistance, on the part of the H1N1 virus at this time.

Employers are still requested to relax their policies that require doctor's visit to document employees' illness. If one feeling sick, they should stay home and avoid contact with others.

The 2-1-1 call center for the state is still receiving many calls for assistance and information – 10,000+ calls from general public and 8,000+ from providers, schools, government offices, etc..

The manufacturing of this vaccine is the same as that of the regular seasonal flu vaccine. No studies or signs have shown that this would have any higher rate of risk than the regular flu vaccination. The H1N1 flu vaccine is not mandatory, despite the rumors, and it is not too late to get both the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines, as the flu season often extends into the month of May each year. And as the traditional flu season will still come, both viruses will be making people sick at the same time, but most should recover without problems from either strain.

Texas Education Agency:

School Districts should continue to effectively communicate with parents about the flu situation in their area. ISDs should also review their policies that require students to bring back a doctor's note, to assess if this should be waived temporarily for this H1N1 Influenza Outbreak. This decision is one of local control, but TEA advises that ISDs should listen to their parents and stakeholders when making the decision that is best for them.

TEA continues to concur with DSHS guidance on the amount of time away from school. Parents should be vigilant in monitoring the health of their children.

TEA waiver rule of 90% should be paid attention to. Any individual school district's policies for school absences and school make-up days should be clearly communicated with parents and community.

See the TEA H1N1 Influenza Website (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=5477>) for updates on waiver paperwork and documents, and all related information. There are waiver for both missed days, as well as low attendance days. Schools should pay attention to their locally-determined trigger points for absenteeism to determine when and if schools should close.

0 districts and campus locations are closed currently in Texas.

Schools should seek local assistance and collaboration with local emergency and health officials and agencies. Schools should continue to consult the Texas Department of Agriculture, for guidance on how to serve free and reduced meals during school closures.

Flu prevention posters are available for download and print, in English and Spanish, through the TEA website listed above.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:

Nothing new to report, with no higher education campuses closing due to the H1N1 Influenza outbreak. All colleges and universities are encouraged to still monitor the THECB website and to report their contact person information to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, as soon as possible. For more information, see the THECB website at:

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=318C3200-F1F5-5D28-6CC77D9988819AA3>.

Texas Dept of Agriculture:

School districts must go through a process through Texas Department of Agriculture first, before being allowed to serve meals. See more information on <http://www.squaremeals.org> (more specifically,

http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_33190_33228_0,00.html#33228). More ISDs are still requested to fill out this information.

188 ISDs (of 1200+ in TX) so far have submitted waivers for this opportunity to serve meals during a school district closure. This is a total of 2766 feeding sites in all. All school districts are recommended to do this ahead of time. No schools to date have invoked their waiver with their Department of Agriculture.

2.7 million children qualify for free and reduced meals at school in Texas.

Texas Animal Health Commission:

TAHC is remaining active in their surveillance of the nationwide H1N1 situation.

3 states in the US have found H1N1 in swine (Indiana and Minnesota, and a state – but not Texas), and in a few other countries, as well.

This level of infestation has been expected all along, and is nothing to be concerned about. As of today, there has been no transfer of H1N1 from swine to people, but only from people to swine.

It is OK to eat pork, as the H1N1 Influenza is a respiratory virus and not a blood borne pathogen. It is not found in the meat of the animal population.

FEMA Region 6:

FEMA has been monitoring the situation and is ready to support Texas, if requested.

Q&A:

A lull has been seen now in some communities' current H1N1 activity, though it hit some particular areas hard, earlier in the season. Is H1N1 expected to come back around again in another wave?

We do not know if we are going to see another wave in this particular pandemic. We have seen multiple waves of flu in past pandemics, though. Plus, we are expecting the regular seasonal flu season to take place this year.

Is there a call-in number and PIN for next week's teleconference?

(866) 254-5935

PIN 116667#

Do you have any idea when vaccines will be available at community pharmacies?

No good idea, but best projections are at the end of November. There is really no way of knowing the certain date. So, it will probably be into December before the vaccine is sent out to pharmacies

Is there any interaction with Tylenol having a diminishing effect of the efficacy on the H1N1 vaccine?

The DSHS has not seen any studies that indicate this type of influence. This may just be an urban legend or rumor.

School nurses are health care providers and have been noted in the past as priority recipients of the first H1N1 vaccines. Commonly, though, hospital staff members are getting these as the highest priority. Can school nurses be moved up higher on priority list?

This is a local decision on how and to whom the vaccine distribution is done. The state has left it up to the local health departments and distributors. School nurses can contact local community providers and local health department to determine how the distribution is being done locally, and also encourage them to move school nurses up in the priority list.

Are we currently in a lull in Texas H1N1 rates?

Things have been leveling off in Texas, if not even slight decreases at this time. Hospital ER visits and outpatient medical offices have been leveling off some in the number of patients they are seeing daily.

What is the best way to prevent spread of illness among kids who work with show animals?

If kids sick, they should get someone else to care for their animal until they are better. If a student has a sick pig, then that student should alert their local veterinarian and follow their advice. All should wash their hands, clothes, and boots after animal contact. One particular set of clothing and boots could be used specifically for feeding times. Caretakers should wash these clothes regularly, and disinfect shoes with soap and water or other disinfectant.

**The next H1N1 Statewide Teleconference Call will be:
Wednesday, November 11th, 2009 at 10 am.
The phone number and access codes will remain the same:
(866) 254-5935 phone / 116667 access code**

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