

Policy for Social Distancing at Oregon State University

Introduction

The world has been aware of influenza outbreaks for centuries. International health experts predict another pandemic influenza will occur, although the timing and pattern of the pandemic will be unpredictable. When it does occur, it is anticipated that the impact will be extensive, with millions in the Northwest infected and many thousands dying from their infection.

Three influenza pandemics have occurred in the previous centuries alone which have caused significant deaths and social disruption. These include:

- 1918 (Spanish) influenza pandemic caused at least 675,000 U.S. deaths and up to 50 million deaths worldwide
- 1957 (Asian) influenza pandemic caused at least 70,000 U.S. deaths and 1-2 million deaths worldwide
- 1968 (Hong Kong) influenza pandemic caused about 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths world wide

During a pandemic influenza outbreak:

- Vaccine will not be available for 6 months.
- Antiviral drugs will be used to treat only the ill.

In the modern world of rapid and frequent air travel, infectious diseases can move around the world with lightning speed. During a pandemic, major disruptions to health care, transportation, infrastructure, education, suppliers and other public services are anticipated to occur. In order to suppress panic, preserve assets and avoid last-minute decision making activities, it is necessary for Oregon State University to prepare for a pandemic outbreak *prior* to its occurrence. Planning and preparing now will allow the institution to conduct decision making in a thoughtful manner and indicate to our constituents and the public that we recognize our responsibility and obligations to our students, faculty, staff, their families, and the community.

Preparedness and Planning

The main defense and containment approach recommended by public officials for an influenza outbreak is *social distancing*. The need for social distancing is based on scientific knowledge of how the influenza virus spreads, primarily through person-to-person transmission.

As defined in the following two sections, a social distancing policy at OSU calls for a campus closure that suspends classes and other public gatherings and limits campus operations to essential functions. If a severe influenza pandemic (Category 5 per the CDC Pandemic Severity Index) (http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/community_mitigation.pdf) were to occur, we should expect to institute a social distancing policy for a period of 10-12 weeks.

The Planning for Pandemic Team (PPT) has identified guiding principles to aid in planning for a pandemic outbreak and conducting operations during an outbreak. We, the PPT, are at a critical juncture in the planning process. We need concurrence from senior administration on the following guiding principles in order to proceed with planning activities.

Oregon State University Prime Directives:

Prime Directive 1: Minimize the Loss of Life

Prime Directive 2: House, Feed, and Provide Medical Care to Students Who are Unable to Obtain Alternative Housing

Prime Directive 3: Protect Irreplaceable Live University Research

Prime Directive 4: Preserve Assets of the University and Insure Revenue Flow

Prime Directive 5: Preserve Academic Standing

Definition of Social Distancing Policy – Campus Closure:

All classes will be suspended; most campus academic administrative, and support operations will be closed. Minimal utilities will be supplied to buildings. All routine, normal daily housekeeping and maintenance activities will cease until such a time when the reopening of campus buildings has been announced. Buildings will be secured in a way to prevent reentry by all but approved essential employees. Most research activities that depend upon campus facilities will be suspended as well. Department of Public Safety, Oregon State Police, safety and facilities staff, and a small number of other essential employees will be available to maintain safe, secure, and hazard free buildings. In all cases, the manner in which essential employees conduct themselves while on campus will be done so as to minimize their exposure to others who may be carrying the virus.

Definition of Essential Functions and Essential Employees:

Essential Functions are those minimum activities required to support the University's Prime Directives. Essential Employees are those individuals identified to carry-out the Essential Functions:

A partial list of Essential Functions that support the Prime Directives include activities that:

- support the livability of research and herd animals
- house, feed and provide medical care for students living in on-campus housing
- maintain the security of pathogens, radiological materials, and select agents
- respond to emergencies such as hazardous chemical incidents
- maintain safe, secure, and hazard free buildings
- carryout responsibilities related to staffing and payroll for essential employees
- maintain a minimal or basic communication systems
- provide fit testing for personal protective equipment (i.e. respirators)
- provide vehicle maintenance and fueling for vehicles
- maintain the Banner software system
- power down and secure the on-campus reactor
- carryout responsibilities related to preserving assets and insuring revenue flow

Pandemic Response Levels:

The pandemic event has been divided into “activation points” that will signal University response at different stages of the emergency. The final University pandemic preparedness plan will identify the actions to be taken at each of these response levels.

- Level 1:** Influenza detected in animal, limited animal to human transfer.
- Level 2:** First case of efficient human-to-human transmission internationally.
- Level 3:** First verified human-to-human transmission is detected in the US
- Level 4:** No later than five days after the declaration of Level 3, Level 4 will be activated and the University will enact the social distancing (closure) policy.