Pandemic Influenza

Introduction

H1N1 influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza. Changes to this virus have allowed H1N1 to infect humans. Spread of the virus occurs mainly through poor coughing/sneezing etiquette or poor hand washing and then touching of a regular contact surface (door knobs, handles, etc.). The virus can then be transferred to another person's hand and in turn their mucus membranes (eyes, nose, mouth). H1N1 (swine influenza) has been seen worldwide with varying degrees of severity. With symptoms similar to regular seasonal influenza, steps need to be taken in order to help prevent (and respond) to any outbreaks in Cowichan Valley schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this exposure control plan is to outline the measures the Cowichan Valley School District will implement in order to reduce the spread of the H1N1 virus within the school community including students, staff and the general public.

Responsibilities

Emergency Response Team

The District has set up an Pandemic Emergency Response Team that will be comprised of, but not limited to, the Superintendent of Schools, the Secretary Treasurer, the Director of Operations and the Occupational Health and Safety Manager. This team is responsible to:

- Oversee this Exposure Control Plan for pandemic influenza
- Closely monitor of illnesses within the district
- Report high absenteeism rates to the Vancouver Island Health Authority
- Coordinate the flow of information to the school community

Administration and Supervisors

Following recommendations outlined by both the Ministry of Education and the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Administration and Supervisors of the Cowichan Valley School District have the following responsibilities when faced with the potential of a pandemic influenza outbreak:

- Education of proper hand washing techniques
- Education of proper sneezing coughing etiquette
- Increased cleaning when required
- Recognition of an individual's right to confidentiality

Administrators will continue to have clear lines of communication with groups making use of their facilities (such as daycares and Strongstart) regarding possible cases of influenza.

Employees

Employees of the District are responsible to:

- Practice proper hand washing procedures and proper sneezing/coughing etiquette.
- Notify their supervisor of high absenteeism rates
- Notify their supervisor immediately of confirmed H1N1 cases
- Instruct students, with age appropriate techniques, on the proper procedures for washing hands as well as proper sneezing/coughing etiquette

Communications Plan

District administration has implemented a Communications Plan for the purpose of sharing information with schools, parents/guardians and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. This plan includes:

Pre Exposure Communication

- Provide information related to H1N1 influenza on the Cowichan Valley School District web site
- Education of proper hand washing techniques to staff and students through instructional posters installed at sinks throughout the district
- Education of good coughing/sneezing etiquette through posters (same as above)
- Instruction to administrators regarding aspects of the Exposure Control Plan

Post Exposure Communication

- Provide information related to H1N1 influenza on the Cowichan Valley School District web site
- Schools report absenteeism rates that are 10% or more above normal rates for their school
- Superintendent of Schools (or designate) reports absenteeism figures to VIHA as required
- Schools send notices home to parents/guardians when there are confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza in their school (standard notice is provided by the Pandemic Emergency Response Team – see attached)

Reporting Procedures

Under certain circumstances, school administration make reports as follows:

- Greater than 10% of school population (above normal levels) sick
  - Notify the Superintendent of Schools
  - Superintendent to notifies public health
  - Superintendent notifies the Occupational Health and Safety Manager
  - Occupational Health and Safety Manager notifies the Custodial Supervisor

Prevention

The Cowichan Valley School District is closely following the recommendations of the Vancouver Island Health Authority with respect to prevention measures. These measures include:

Attendance

The most effective way to reduce the spread of the H1N1 virus is to reduce exposure. Sick staff and students should be staying home while they are sick to prevent spreading the illness among the school community.

Students that arrive at school with flu like symptoms or become sick while at school should be separated from the general population until their caregiver can pick them up. The school medical room can be used for this purpose however anywhere that they are not in close proximity to others will do. On days when this occurs, the custodian coming in that evening will be notified so that contact surfaces in those areas can be cleaned.

Proper Hand Washing

The best way to protect yourself from H1N1, and most germs for that matter, is by practicing proper hand washing techniques. These 6 steps can prevent you from inadvertently transferring the virus/germ from a contact surface (door knob, light switch, etc.) to susceptible areas (nose, mouth, etc.).

- Wet hands
- Add soap
- Scrub hands, all sides
- Rinse
- Dry
- Use paper towel to turn off faucet

The Cowichan Valley School District has published and posted a poster with these 6 steps on it at sinks throughout the district.

Important points to consider:

- All you need is water, soap and the friction of rubbing your hands together to clean them sufficiently. Antibacterial soap is not required.
- If you do not have access to soap and water, use a hand sanitizer as an effective alternative.
- Scrubbing your hands together for 15 to 20 seconds with soap and water is all that is needed. (Singing Happy Birthday to yourself 2 times is a good way to ensure you have scrubbed your hands long enough).

Proper Sneezing and Coughing Etiquette

The best way to protect others from influenza is to practice proper sneezing and coughing etiquette.

Do:
- Sneeze/cough into a disposable Kleenex or your sleeve (elbow/arm)
- Direct the sneeze/cough away from those in the general area
- Wash your hands frequently

Do Not:
- Sneeze/cough without covering your mouth
- Sneeze/cough into re-usable hankies
- Sneeze/ cough into your hands (if you do, wash hands immediately)

High Absenteeism Rates

In the event that absenteeism rates due to influenza reach high levels an additional step will be taken. The district has 6 portable hand sanitizing stations which can be delivered to schools on an as needed basis. When it is determined that a school is in need of one of these stations, Operations will deliver it to the hallway outside the main office.

- These stations are only intended as a supplement to the proper hand washing as outlined above
- They will be refilled by Operations as required
- They must remain supervised at all times
- And will remain in place until it is determined that absenteeism levels have dropped to a more acceptable level

Custodial Practices

While it is recognized that the best way to protect yourself from influenza is by practicing proper hand washing techniques, the district will put in place certain custodial practices in an effort to help slow the spread of the influenza virus in CVSD schools. These practices include:

- The use of cleaning products deemed effective in cleaning surfaces contaminated with the influenza virus
- Giving higher priority to cleaning high contact surfaces in schools with high absenteeism due to influenza like illnesses (contact surfaces include such things as doorknobs, light switches and etc)
- As much as is possible, full custodial coverage will be maintained in schools with high absenteeism due to influenza like illnesses
- If a vaccine clinic is held in a school the custodians will place a high priority on the contact surfaces in those areas

Reference and Cross Reference Material

Vancouver Island Health Authority website
http://www.viha.ca/h1n1/

Government of British Columbia website
http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/

Removal of Lead-Containing Paint, Using Hand Tools

Introduction

Removing lead-containing paint without proper controls can generate lead dust. Lead enters the body when the dust is inhaled or ingested (swallowed). Once it is in the bloodstream, lead can be carried throughout the body. Lead exposure can cause a number of health effects, including weakness, headaches, stomach cramps, muscle and joint pain, and memory problems.

Health Hazards from Lead Exposure

- Lead interferes with many body processes and is poisonous to most organs and tissues.
- Acute lead poisoning (high exposure over a short period of time) can cause fatigue, anemia, constipation, and damage to the nervous system.
- Chronic lead poisoning (exposure over a longer period of time) can cause fatigue, joint pain, and weakness.
- Lead poisoning can damage the fetus in pregnant female workers, and impair fertility in male workers.
- Workers are exposed to lead when they inhale lead-containing dust or ingest lead residue from their hands (for example, when eating, chewing gum, or smoking).
- Lead is a suspected human carcinogen and has been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals.

Purpose

The purpose of this exposure control plan is to outline the measures the Cowichan Valley School District will implement to protect our staff and students from lead exposure during the removal of lead-containing paints and coatings.

Responsibilities

The Employer

- Ensure that the materials and other resources are readily available to fully implement and maintain this ECP.
- Ensure that supervisors and workers are educated in the hazards of lead exposure, and trained to work safely during the removal of lead-containing paints and coatings.
- Ensure that workers follow the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the *Workers Compensation Act.*
- Maintain written records of training, fit-test results, and inspections.
- Conduct an annual review (or more often if conditions change) of the effectiveness of the ECP.

Administration and Supervisors

- Provide adequate instruction to workers on the hazards of lead exposure.
- Select and implement the appropriate control measures.
- Ensure that workers using respirators have been properly trained and fit-tested, and that the results are recorded.
- Ensure that work is conducted in a manner that minimizes and adequately controls the risk to workers and others. This includes ensuring that workers use appropriate engineering controls and wear the necessary PPE.
- Immediately correct unsafe acts and conditions.

Employees

- Participate in all required health and safety education and training.
- Use the assigned protective equipment in an effective and safe manner.
- Follow established work procedures as directed by the supervisor.
- Report any unsafe conditions or acts to the supervisor.
- Report to the employer any exposure incidents or any signs or symptoms of lead illness.

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

- Lead-containing paints can contain anywhere from 0.009% to 50% lead by weight. Studies have shown that removal of paint with a lead content as low as 0.06% can generate airborne concentrations of lead that approach the occupational exposure limit.
- Removing lead-containing paint without the use of proper controls and PPE can expose workers to levels of airborne lead dust that are above the exposure limit listed in the Regulation.
- Unprotected workers or other persons may be exposed to the hazards of lead. All lead work locations will be enclosed by barriers or barrier tape and identified with signs or placards.

Exposure Limit

- The occupational exposure (OEL) for inorganic lead is 0.05 milligrams per cubic meter (mg/m^3)
- Because lead is a suspected human carcinogen and linked with cancer in animals, workplace exposures must be reduced to levels that are As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) below the OEL.

Lead Dust Controls

- The Regulation requires employers to select lead dust controls based on the following hierarchy:
  1. Engineering controls (for example: barriers, enclosures, general ventilation, local exhaust ventilation)

2. Administrative controls (for example: wash stations, separate eating and changing areas, and limiting the time workers are exposed to lead)
3. Personal protective equipment (such as respirators and disposable coveralls)

- Respirators will be used in conjunction with other controls to reduce worker exposure to lead, unless air monitoring information suggests otherwise.
- A HEPA vacuum will be used for cleanup and decontamination.

Acceptable control methods for removing lead-containing paint can be found at the end of this document.

Safe Work Planning

- Select one of more of the methods described in the appendix.
- Establish a barrier or full enclosure around the work zone to restrict access by unprotected workers (full enclosures may require negative-pressure ventilation through a HEPA filter).
- Inspect all dust control equipment and tools to make sure they are in good working order.
- Use and maintain all tools and equipment as specified by the manufacturer. For example: test the effectiveness of HEPA filters using dioctyl phthalate (DOP) testing or similar means at least annually, and any time a HEPA filter is replaced in a vacuum cleaner or ventilation system.

Respiratory protective equipment

- Each worker will be fit-tested if a respirator is required.
- If a worker is required to wear a respirator that requires an effective seal with the face for proper functioning, the worker must be clean-shaven where the respirator seals with the face.
- When the worker notices a notable resistance to breathing, the respirator filters must be replaced.
- Respirators will be used, cleaned, and stored in accordance with the respiratory protection program.

Other Personal Protective Equipment and Hygiene

- Washing (and shower, if required) facilities should be located between “clean” changing areas and “dirty” work areas.
- Workers should remove contaminated outer work clothing and thoroughly wash their hands and faces before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- No eating, drinking, smoking, chewing gum, or nail biting should be allowed or stored in the work area.
- Coffee and lunch breaks should be taken in a clean area separate from the work area.
- For all work other than low risk, unless wearing Tyvek (or similar) coveralls, workers shall:
    - Change from street clothes to work clothes (including footwear) at the beginning of their work shift.
    - Remove all work clothes and shoes at the end of the work day and leave them at work.
    - Keep street clothes separate from work clothes.
- Workers should wash (or shower) before leaving work to ensure that any potential contamination is removed before they go home.
- Workers should not take any contaminated items home, as this may expose family members to lead.

Housekeeping Procedures

- Dry sweeping and the use of compressed air are prohibited for removing dust and debris containing lead. Work areas and equipment covered by dust will be cleaned at the end of every shift using a HEPA-filtered vacuum.
- Wet cleanup may also be used to remove dust.
- Waste material will be placed in a dumpster, and will be removed at least weekly. The location and method used to store waste will not allow lead-containing dust to re-enter the workplace.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that work areas are free from dust at the end of each shift.

Worker Training for Lead Exposure

- Training will be performed by the employer or the employer’s designate.
- Records of attendance, dates of training, and training material will be documented and retained.
- Additional training or reference material on lead exposure will be made available to employees upon request.
- Training topics:
    - Health hazards of lead exposure
    - Engineering controls and safe work practices used to protect workers
    - The importance of proper equipment control and maintenance
    - Housekeeping procedures
    - Proper use of respirators and respirator program

- Personal hygiene procedures to reduce exposures
- The details of the exposure control program for lead

Health Surveillance

- A health monitoring program (including the collection and analysis of blood samples) will be implemented, under the supervision of an occupational physician, for projects more than one week in duration.

Annual Review

- This ECP will be reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary by the employer, in consultation with the workplace health and safety committee or the worker health and safety representative.

Reference and Cross Reference Material

Occupational Health & Safety Manual Section 8.02

WorkSafe Occupational Health & Safety Guidelines G5.54-5

Safe Work Procedures

- Low risk
- Low/Moderate risk