

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: Worldwide H1N1 Flu Outbreak--Update
Park Site: System-Wide
Date: August 12, 2009

Background: The outbreak of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus continues to spread in the United States and worldwide. As of August 6, the World Health Organization reported 177,457 cases in the world and 1,462 deaths. Given that the countries are no longer required to test and report individual cases, the number of cases reported may actually underestimate the real number of cases. As temperate countries finish their winter season, pandemic H1N1 has been the main influenza virus in all of the regions in the Southern Hemisphere, other than South Africa. Countries in the southern part of South America and Australia which experienced a rapid increase of cases of pandemic influenza in early part of the winter season are now seeing a decrease in the number of people seeking care and being admitted to the hospital. In the US, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 6,506 hospitalized cases and 436 deaths in all 50 states as of August 6. CDC no longer keeps track of confirmed and probable case counts, but it is estimated that there were greater than 1 million actual cases between April and June.

The NPS Office of Public health will continue to monitor the H1N1 flu issue and work with the Emergency Services Branch, Risk Management, and other NPS offices to provide updates and guidance to parks on H1N1 flu issues.

Current Status:

- Please see the CDC H1N1 flu website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>) for the most recent information
- For NPS-specific issues, go to InsideNPS and click on the H1N1 flu link
- H1N1 influenza A
 - A new influenza virus never previously identified
 - Contains genes from avian, human, and swine influenza viruses
 - Humans thought to have little or no immunity
 - Transmission
 - Efficiently transmitted person-to-person
 - Primary mode of transmission thought to be via respiratory droplets (e.g., coughing or sneezing)
 - NOT transmitted by eating pork or pork products
 - Potential transmitted
- Signs and symptoms in humans
 - Similar to symptoms of regular seasonal flu
 - Fever and cough are the most common symptoms (fever reported in 93% and cough reported in 83% of patients hospitalized with H1N1)
 - 29% of patients have reported vomiting and 24% have reported diarrhea
 - Higher percentage than typically seen with seasonal flu
- Public health actions
 - CDC
 - Collecting information on hospitalized cases and deaths
 - Issued multiple guidance documents for the public, healthcare workers, schools, and other populations/settings

- H1N1 flu vaccine in development
 - Developing recommendations on groups of population that should be prioritized if vaccine is initially available in limited quantities
- NPS
 - The Office of Public Health will be launching an educational campaign on H1N1 in the fall to include widespread distribution of posters and handouts for parks to display and distribute
 - Risk management will provide park units with a respiratory protection guidance document and the NPS Emergency Services Branch will assist parks with information about purchasing masks
 - Formed a Servicewide H1N1 Coordination and Response Team
 - Participating in the Department of Interior Emergency Management Council
 - Providing updates and briefings for NPS senior staff
 - Participating in CDC briefings
 - Posting H1N1 information to two websites (intranet and public access)
 - Assisting NPS units and regional offices in:
 - Developing and/or implementing pandemic influenza preparedness/response measures
 - Interpreting CDC guidance documents as applicable to NPS employees, visitors, and work settings
 - Prevention and control measures for NPS employees and their families
 - Stay informed of the H1N1 flu outbreak (visit CDC and NPS websites)
 - Pay attention to local and state public health actions (may vary from community to community, depending on current cases)
 - If you develop flu-like symptoms, you should stay home at least 24 hours after the fever is gone
 - Contact your healthcare provider if:
 - You are worried about your symptoms or they become severe
 - You are at high-risk for complications from H1N1 (e.g., children ≤ 5 years, pregnant women, people aged 25-64 who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza)
 - To prevent the spread of H1N1 flu:
 - Avoid close contact with ill persons
 - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizers
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
 - Additional NPS-specific recommendations/materials to be distributed, as needed.

Contacts:

CDR David Wong, MD, Medical Epidemiologist, WASO Office of Public Health, (505) 248-7806,

David.Wong@nps.gov

CAPT Chuck Higgins, Director, Office of Public Health, (202)-513-7217,

Charles.Higgins@nps.gov