



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 23, 2007

CONTACT: Rich Harris, 860-299-6237
rich.harris@ct.gov

Governor Rell Announces Pandemic Influenza Public Education Campaign

Stresses Importance of Individual Preparedness

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced the start of a public education campaign to encourage Connecticut residents to be prepared for pandemic influenza.

“September is National Preparedness Month, and we need to make certain we are prepared for any type of disaster, whether it is natural or manmade,” Governor Rell said. “While no one knows for sure when a pandemic will strike, we know that pandemics do happen. Fortunately, we can take steps now to prepare for this potential public health crisis.”

Pandemic influenza is a worldwide outbreak of a strain of influenza virus for which people have little or no immunity. During an influenza pandemic, the flu virus spreads easily from person to person, causes serious illness and can sweep across the world in a very short time. The 20th century saw three pandemics of influenza, including the Spanish Flu of 1918, which caused at least 500,000 United States deaths and up to 40 million deaths worldwide.

“It is very important that we prepare now for pandemic influenza,” stated Department of Public Health (DPH) Commissioner J. Robert Galvin. “As individuals, we play an essential role in pandemic flu preparedness.”

Steps the public can take now to improve their level of preparedness are as follows:

- **Become even more diligent about good hygiene.** Washing your hands regularly is one of the best ways to protect yourself against any kind of infectious disease. The same goes for coughing into a tissue or your sleeve instead of into your hands and keeping your hands away from your nose and mouth. Performing the basics now makes them second nature to you and your family if and when a pandemic occurs.
- **Improve your overall health.** The healthier you are, the more resistant your body is to disease, so there is no time like the present to have that regular physical checkup. Keep your immunizations – and those of your loved ones – up to date; stop using tobacco; moderate your alcohol intake and develop better eating and exercise habits.

STATE CAPITOL, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106
TEL: (860) 566-4840, FAX: (860) 524-7396
www.ct.gov/governor

- **Create your family preparedness plan.** Pandemic flu planning for individuals and families is not all that different from planning in advance for natural or human-created disasters such as hurricanes or terror attacks. Have a two-week supply of food and water on hand at all times. Have a “cash stash.” Prepare a family communications plan. Learn more by downloading the Connecticut Guide to Emergency Preparedness at <http://www.dph.state.ct.us/bt/ready/btpdnsephome.htm>

An especially severe influenza pandemic, like the one seen in 1918, could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. Everyday life would be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time. Impacts can range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery.

The educational campaign is designed to arm Connecticut residents with important information about pandemic influenza, how it differs from seasonal influenza, what they can expect to happen during a pandemic and steps they can take now to prepare.

Elements of the campaign include:

- A 30-second television message from Governor Rell on how to protect oneself from seasonal flu and prepare for pandemic flu. The message will air on network affiliates, cable and the Univision channel
- Advertising in ethnic newspapers (including advertisements in Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, French Creole and Chinese)
- Grocery bag stuffers that feature information about a pandemic influenza preparedness kit distributed through A&P, Big Y, C-Town, Shaw’s, ShopRite and Stop & Shop supermarket chains and Foodshare, the chain of 400 food banks in the state.
- Distribution of an informational pamphlet through DPH healthcare and community partners
- CT Flu Watch (www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch), the state’s pandemic influenza website

In 2005, Governor Rell asked four state agencies – DPH, Environmental Protection, Emergency Management and Homeland Security and Agriculture – to begin working together on pandemic flu preparedness. The State of Connecticut Pandemic Flu Task Force, made up of state agencies and community partners, has been developing, drilling and exercising pandemic flu plans to maximize the state’s level of preparedness.

For additional information on pandemic flu, please visit:

- **CT Flu Watch:** www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch
- **US Department of Health and Human Services:** www.pandemicflu.gov

The Connecticut Department of Public Health is the state’s leader in public health policy and advocacy with a mission to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state. To contact the department, please visit its website at www.dph.state.ct.us or call (860) 509-7270.