

Protecting Your Employees and Business from Pandemic Human Influenza

Action manual for
small and medium-sized enterprises

Tsuyoshi Kawakami



Avian and Human Influenza in the Workplace (Thailand) Project
Subregional Office for East Asia

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PREFACE

The outbreak of avian influenza and the ongoing incidences of infected cases have prompted worldwide concern. The International Labour Organization (ILO), realizing the significance of preparing all sectors in the event of pandemic human influenza, initiated a pilot project entitled “Avian and Human Influenza in the Workplace (Thailand) Project”. This project is funded by the UN Central Fund for Influenza Action (CFIA).

One of the key activities of this project is to develop training materials to promote safe practices in small and medium-sized enterprises. This training manual is a product of several field visits to find good practices of pandemic human influenza prevention measures and consultations with Thai Ministries of Public Health and Labour, WHO, UNSIC (UN System Influenza Coordination) and other UN agencies. These observations formed the basis of the illustrations and contents of the training manual.

The manual is user-friendly and practical, providing an action-checklist on various prevention measures including explanations and descriptions. The unique participatory training methods of the ILO, Work Improvement in Small Enterprises (WISE) and Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development (WIND), were used to promote understanding and encourage improvement actions of employers and workers in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The scope of the project’s training manual and action-checklist will not be limited to Thailand. Instead, they will serve as a model, which can be adapted to different countries’ contexts and needs to further promote pandemic planning.

The ILO project team prepared the text and the action-checklist, and supervised the development of the illustrations. The team consisted of: Dr Tsuyoshi Kawakami, Senior Occupational Safety and Health Specialist of the ILO Subregional Office for East Asia; Ms Duanne Punpiputt & Ms Suttida Chaikitsakol, National Project Coordinators; and Ms Monrudee Sucharitakul, Project Secretary. We are grateful to Mr Donato Kiniger-Passigli, Senior Specialist, ILO CRISIS in Geneva and Ms Jittima Srisuknam, Programme Officer of the ILO Subregional Office for East Asia for their valuable advice.

The ILO extends special acknowledgement to all that have contributed to the development of the manual and action-checklist and hopes that the training manual will help many small and medium-sized enterprises develop preparedness plans for pandemic human influenza.



Bill Salter
Director
ILO Subregional Office for East Asia
Bangkok, Thailand
January 2009

Protecting your employees and business from Pandemic Human Influenza

ACTION CHECKLIST for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST

1. Read each item carefully. Look for a way to apply the measure. If necessary ask some questions to managers and workers in your company.
2. If the measure has been applied or it is not needed, mark **NO** under “Do you propose action?”. If you think the measure is worthwhile, mark **YES**. Use the space under **REMARKS** to put a description of your suggestion or its location.
3. After you have gone through all the items, look again at the items you have marked **YES**. Choose a few items where the benefits seem likely to be the most important. Mark **PRIORITY** for these items.
4. Before finishing, make sure that you have marked **NO** or **YES** for each item, and that for some items marked **YES** you have marked **PRIORITY**.



I. Collect information

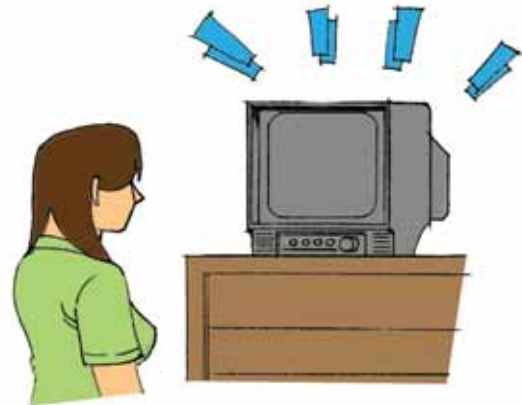
1. Collect updated information on the Pandemic Human Influenza situation from health offices, labour offices, and employers' organizations.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



2. Share the information with your customers, suppliers, banks, neighbouring companies, and other business partners.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



3. Share the information with workers and discuss the improvement in the occupational safety and health committee.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



II. Develop a company preparedness plan

4. Show the management commitment to protect workers and the business from Pandemic Human Influenza.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



5. Organize a committee to prepare the plan.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:



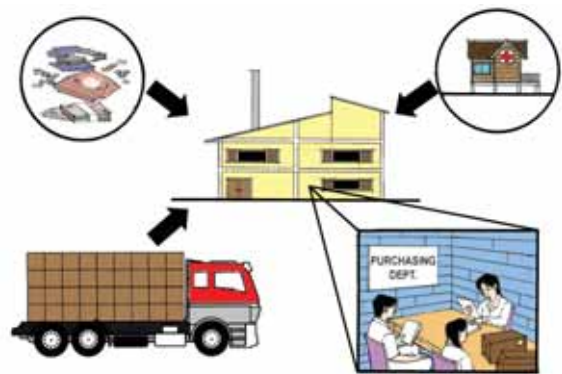
6. Design the preparedness plan to cover key aspects of your business continuity such as supply of raw materials, cash stock, transportation means, and product delivery to your customers.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:



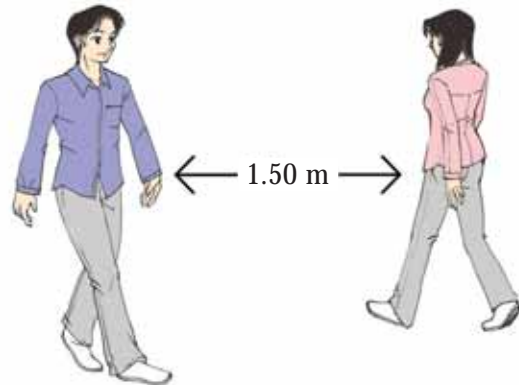
7. Prepare practical support measures to protect your workers including medical care, personal hygiene habits, and work procedures to minimize human-to-human contact.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:



8. Collect and learn from preparedness plans of other companies.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:



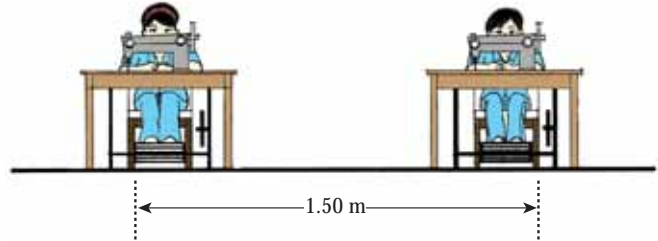
III. Minimize human-to-human contact at the workplace

9. Keep 1.50 meters or more between work stations.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

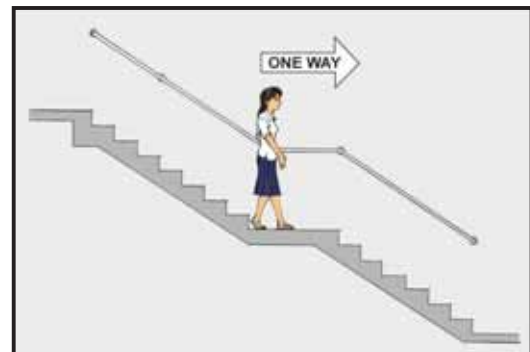


10. Promote one-way use of staircases and paths.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:



11. Assign staff to work at home if the work can be done at home.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:



12. Organize telephone or internet meetings instead of face-to-face meetings.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:



13. Clean and disinfect door knobs, water taps, switches, copiers and other items which many people touch constantly.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



14. Provide safe transportation means for company staff.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



IV. Personal hygiene habits

15. Establish a company practice that everyone washes their hands carefully.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



16. Allow workers to use a mask in the workplace and also when they are outside.

Do you propose action?

- No
- Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



17. Cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief when you cough or sneeze.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:
.....



18. If there is no handkerchief, sneeze or cough into your elbow and not your hand. This will spread less germ.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:
.....



19. Train workers how to wash hands and wear masks appropriately.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:
.....



20. Ensure that the workplace has a sufficient number of washing sinks.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:
.....



V. Support sick workers

21. Regularly make contact by phone or internet with sick workers staying at home or their families to provide support.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



22. Discuss with your workers possible support measures for sick workers staying at home.

Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



23. Advise workers to prepare sufficient cash, food, water, soap and other necessities for Pandemic Human Influenza.

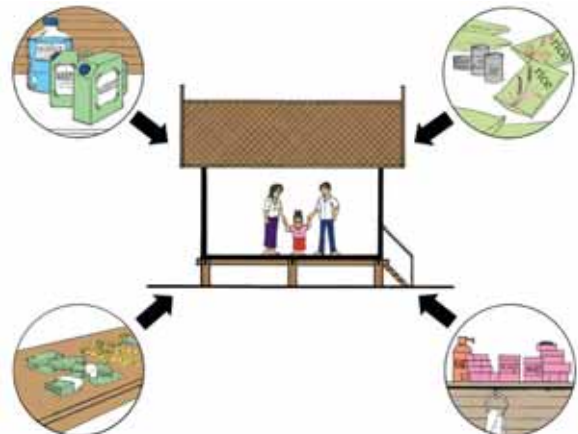
Do you propose action?

No

Yes Priority

Remarks:

.....



CHECKPOINT 1

Collect updated information on Pandemic Human Influenza to protect your workers and business

BENEFITS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES

Small enterprises need to protect their workers and business from future Pandemic Human Influenza. Many of them plan to keep running their business under a pandemic situation. Collecting updated information on Pandemic Human Influenza is the first step to planning and implementing practical actions to protect your workers and business under future Pandemic.

Small enterprises can do many things at the workplace level to reduce the risk of Pandemic Human Influenza infection. Reducing direct human-to-human contact in the work procedure is possible in many ways. Owners and workers can jointly promote personal hygiene habits such as washing hands, or coughing etiquettes. Your preparation for Pandemic Human Influenza will be able to provide a good model to other small enterprises in terms of protective measures, guidelines and instructions to staff.

HOW TO IMPROVE

1. Collect updated information on the Pandemic Human Influenza situation from health or labour offices, employers' organizations, and business associations near your company.
2. Pay attention to TV and Radio news which provides the latest information.
3. Constantly visit homepages relating to health and business issues to find updated information on Pandemic Human Influenza. See Annex 1 showing a list of useful websites.

WAYS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Share the updated information you have collected with your employees regularly. Ask

them to inform you of any Pandemic Human Influenza information they have. The clear commitment of the top-management builds a strong foundation for effective cooperation between employers and their workers. Invite the ideas and views of your employees on how to work together to protect their health and workplaces from future Pandemic Human Influenza. For this you may have regular meetings to collect input from your employees.

SOME MORE HINTS

1. Share the information with your customers, suppliers, banks, neighboring companies, and other business partners. Find out useful information sources from them for protecting your business and employees. Discuss collaborative plans with them on how to keep the business running and protect employees under a future Pandemic situation.
2. Multinationals and large enterprises often have their own comprehensive preparedness plans against Pandemic Human Influenza. Ask for their advice when you work with them.
3. Include Pandemic Human Influenza as an important agenda item to occupational safety and health committee activities of your company. Provide regular updates to the members. Assign a safety officer of your company to lead these activities.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Small enterprises can do many things to reduce the risk of Pandemic Human Influenza infection at workplace level.

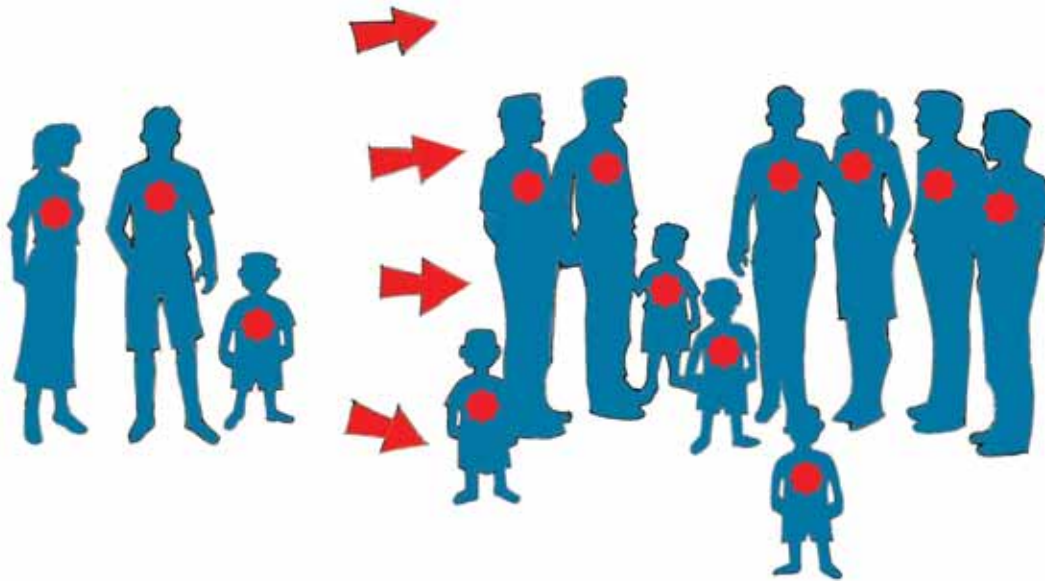


Figure 1.1 Pandemic Human Influenza infects a person directly from another person.

Phase 1	No animal influenza virus circulating among animals has been reported to cause infection in humans.
Phase 2	An animal influenza virus circulating in domesticated or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans and is therefore considered a specific potential pandemic threat.
Phase 3	An animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people, but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community level outbreaks.
Phase 4	Human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to sustain community level outbreaks has been verified.
Phase 5	The same identified virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in two or more countries in one WHO region.
Phase 6	In addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5, the same virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in at least one other country in another WHO region.
Post-peak period	Levels of pandemic influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance have dropped below peak levels.
Possible new wave	Level of pandemic influenza activity in most countries with adequate surveillance rising again.
Post-pandemic period	Levels of influenza activity have returned to the levels seen for seasonal influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance.



Figure 1.2 (Human) Pandemic Influenza Phases by World Health Organization (WHO)



Figure 1.3 Keep collecting updated information on Pandemic Human Influenza. The situation is changing and can directly affect your business.

CHECKPOINT 2

Develop a company preparedness plan for Pandemic Human Influenza

BENEFITS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES

There are many practical ways for small enterprises to prepare themselves for future Pandemic Human Influenza. If you have an effective preparedness plan, you can better protect your business and workers. Your business continuity under the Pandemic would contribute to the whole society. Closure of many small enterprises would cause paralysis of the economy and social disruption.

Commitment and leadership of the owner and the top management are most important to develop a workable company plan and receive full cooperation from your workers. Keep your workers informed about the Pandemic Human Influenza situation and the progress of the company plan. It is also imperative to have a business continuity plan to ensure management of services and sustainability of production irrespective of external factors.

HOW TO IMPROVE

1. State to all staff of your company that the management will make a company preparedness plan for future Pandemic Human Influenza. Tell them the management welcomes their ideas for developing the plan.
2. Organize a committee to prepare the plan. Define who should do what until when.
3. Your plan should cover key aspects to keep your business running under a Pandemic condition. The plan will include supply of raw materials, cash stock for emergency, cash flow from banks, transportation means, and product delivery to your customers.
4. Your plan should provide practical ways to protect your workers. This aspect will include medical care, promotion of personal hygiene habits, and changing the work

organization to minimize human-to-human contact (See CHECKPOINTS 3&4).

WAYS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Involve workers in all the steps of the development of the company preparedness plan and invite their opinions for developing workable plans. The finalized plan would be a real joint product, and both managers and employees would share the sense of ownership of the company plan. This would be the fundamental basis for effective implementation when the Pandemic takes place.

SOME MORE HINTS

1. The preparedness plan does not need to be long and perfect. Develop a concise draft plan first, and revise it step-by-step whenever you have received the updated information and new ideas.
2. Use the Occupational Safety and Health Committee as a practical means to keep updating the plan. Your safety officers will play key roles to keep collecting updated information and making the existing plan stronger.
3. Collect and learn from preparedness plans from other companies. You can also share your company plans to help others.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

.....
Commitment of the top management is most important to protect business and workers.

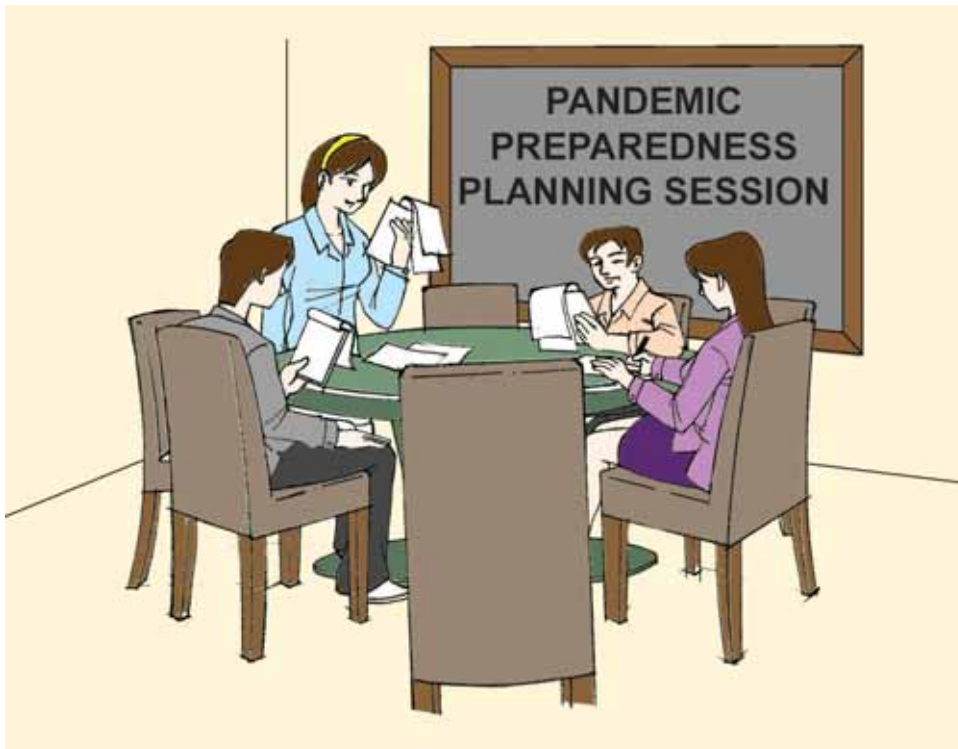


Figure 2.1 Gather views and ideas from workers, supervisors and managers to develop a practical preparedness plan. This would promote everyone's cooperation for effective implementation of your preparedness plan.

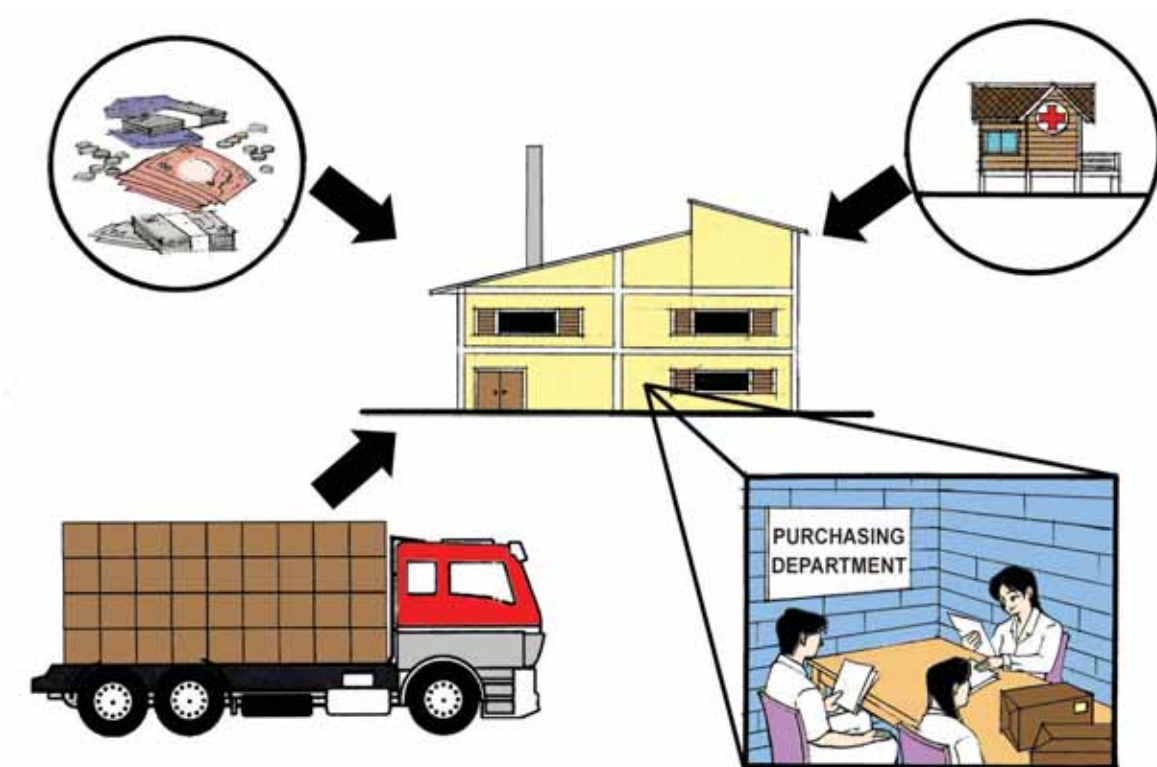


Figure 2.2 Your preparedness plan can cover all key aspects to keep your business running and protect your workers under Pandemic conditions including medical care, staff allocation, layout changes, cash stock, supply of raw materials, etc.

CHECKPOINT 3

Reduce human-to-human contact at the workplace

BENEFITS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES

Pandemic Human Influenza is transmitted human to human. Infection risks can be lower if you reduce direct human-to-human contact and keep appropriate distance from other staff. Workers' anxiety about contracting the disease would decrease, too.

There are many practical, low-cost measures that can avoid or minimize human-to-human contact. These measures are called "social distancing", meaning reduced contacts. Your company can continue doing necessary work by using these measures during the Pandemic.

HOW TO IMPROVE

1. Tell your workers who have a cough, fever, sneezing, headache and other flu symptoms not to come to work.
2. Each workstation can keep an appropriate distance from each other. 1.50 m or more is desirable (Figure 3.1).
3. Promote one-way use of staircases and paths as much as possible to reduce human-to-human contact (Figure 3.2).
4. Place transparent screens at the reception and other areas where many people come and talk (Figure 3.3).
5. Close canteens and pantries where many people gather. Instead, your company should provide boxed food and bottled drinking water for all staff. The food and water are to be placed in a big room. The staff come to the room one-by-one to take the food and water.
6. Staff who can do their work at home should stay at home. They can communicate with the company by phone or internet.
7. Organize telephone or internet meetings instead of face-to-face meetings.
8. Frequently clean and disinfect door knobs, water taps, switches, copiers and other items

which many people touch constantly (Figure 3.4). Mail pigeon holes, tables in resting corners, meeting rooms, toilet rooms can be other high risk points.

WAYS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Invite and listen to workers' ideas minimizing human-to-human contact to reduce infection risks at the workplace. They should have many ideas since they are familiar with their workplace and work procedures. The consultation procedures would strengthen cooperation between workers and employers and ensure effective implementation of your company measures under the Pandemic.

SOME MORE HINTS

1. Provide safer transportation means for company staff. Use company vehicles if available.
2. Cleaning staff might be at higher infection risks. Train them on how to protect themselves. Provide protective caps, masks, rubber gloves, aprons, and boots.
3. When the Pandemic is heavy and infection risks are high, some staff will have to stay in the company for long periods without going outside in order to keep doing minimal, essential work. Prepare rooms for them to stay with food, beds and other necessities.
4. Letters and materials delivered from outside might be contaminated with the virus. They must be kept in designated *quarantine* containers for at least 48 hours before staff open them.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

.....
There are many low-cost, practical ways to minimize human-to-human contact at the workplace and lower infection risks.

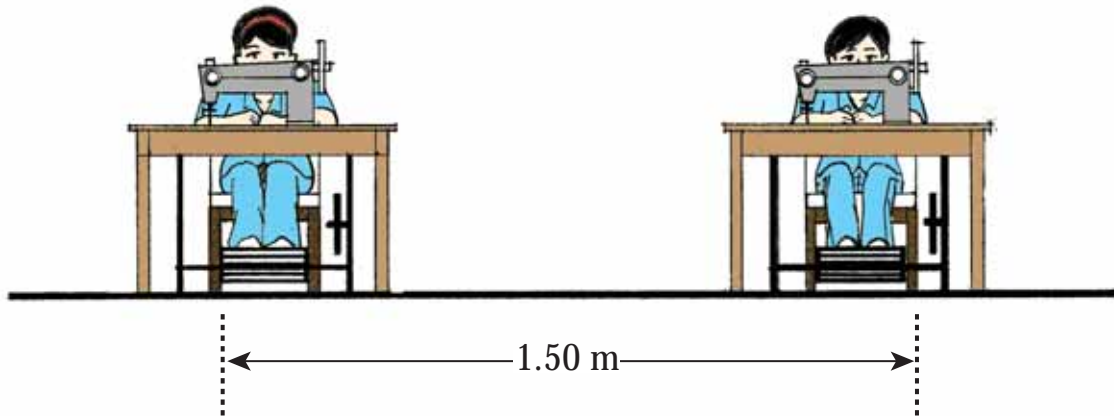


Figure 3.1 Each workstation should keep around 1.50 m between each other.

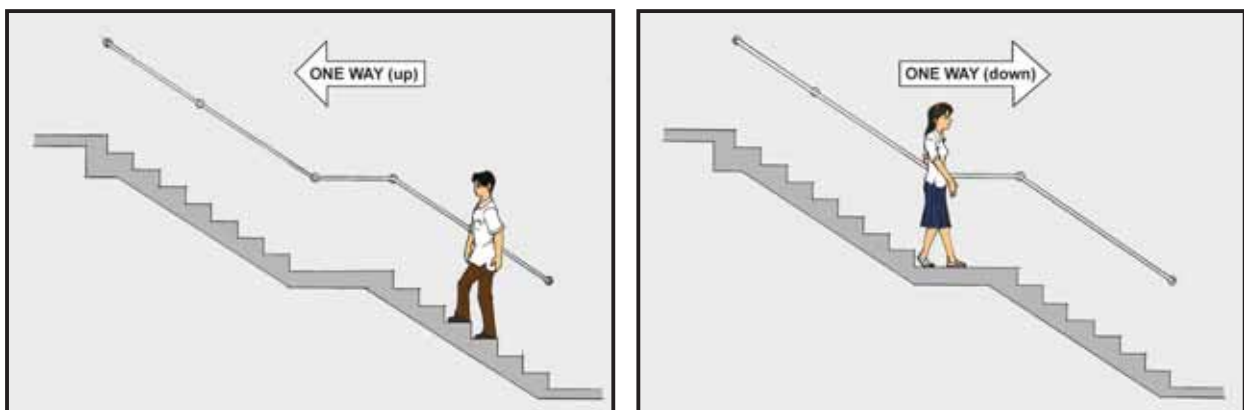


Figure 3.2 One-way staircases and passageways can reduce direct human-to-human contact.



Figure 3.3 Receptionists meet many people day-by-day. Use transparent screens to avoid direct human-to-human contact and reduce infection risks.



Figure 3.4 Clean and disinfect floors, water taps, door knobs as frequently as possible. They can be sources of infection since many people use them everyday. Train cleaners to protect themselves.

CHECKPOINT 4

Promote personal hygiene habits

BENEFITS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES

The Pandemic Human Influenza virus transmits from human to human. Coughing and sneezing spread the virus from infected persons. You may inhale small particles coming from the cough and be infected. The virus can also attach to someone's hands and stay there. These contaminated hands can be sources of spreading the virus through hand shaking, etc. The virus can also stay on the surface of your tables, cups, door knobs and infect you. This is why ensuring good personal hygiene habits is important to reduce infection opportunities.

Once again, success depends very much on the top management's leadership and cooperation with your workers. The management and workers' representatives need to show and keep good hygiene practices to convince all other staff in your company.

HOW TO IMPROVE

1. Establish a company practice that everyone washes their hands carefully as frequently as possible (Figure 4.1). Clean palms, fingers, wrists, and backs of both hands by using soap. Display posters.
2. Allow workers to use a mask in the workplace and also when they are outside. Wear it appropriately (Figure 4.2). A surgical mask that physicians use would be better. If unavailable, a cloth mask would work to some extent.
3. Select a mask that can fit your face. Space between the mask and your face causes air leakage and lowers the effectiveness of the mask.
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief when you cough or sneeze. We call this "Coughing etiquette". This would reduce the spread of the virus. Wash your hands after coughing and sneezing.

5. If there is no handkerchief, sneeze or cough into your elbow (Figure 4.4) and not your hand. This will spread less germ.

WAYS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Discuss with your workers ways to establish personal hygiene habits as your company culture. Find workers who practice good personal hygiene habits and learn from them how to keep this personal behaviour. Share this information with other workers. Promote these personal hygiene measures step-by-step. If more workers join, infection risks in your company will be smaller.

SOME MORE HINTS

1. Top management and workers' representatives should show models of good practice to convince other staff. It is vital here to make available the important utilities like soap, sinks, waste bins, and education materials.
2. Increase the number of hand washing sinks with soap near the workplace for easy-access by all workers. Provide adequate masks for workers, too.
3. Train workers how to wash their hands and wear masks appropriately.
4. Put used masks into a designated rubbish bin. Don't keep used masks in the workplace.
5. Discuss ways to promote personal hygiene behaviour in the safety and health committee. The committee should monitor progress regularly.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Personal hygiene habits like hand washing reduce the risks of Pandemic Human Influenza infection in the workplace and also at home.

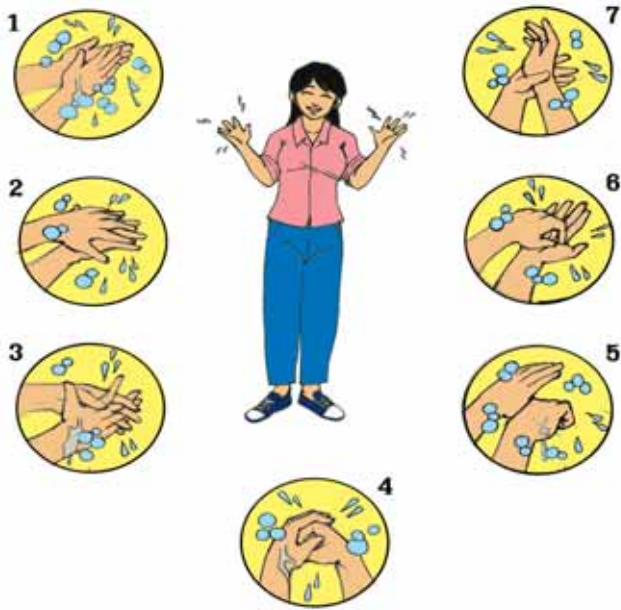


Figure 4.1 Establish a company practice that everyone washes their hands carefully. Clean palms, fingers, wrists, and backs of both hands by using soap.



Figure 4.2 Use masks under a pandemic situation when appropriate. N95 mask (left) is most effective, however a simpler surgical mask (right) is also useful. The mask should fit your face and there should be no air leakage between your face and the mask.



Figure 4.3 Open windows to increase ventilation. Fresh air-flow reduces infection risks.



Figure 4.4 If there is no handkerchief, sneeze or cough into your elbow and not your hand. This will spread less germ.

CHECKPOINT 5

Support sick workers and their families staying at home

BENEFITS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES

Some of your workers might get infected with Pandemic Human Influenza. The workers and their families who stay at home need your company support and encouragement. Even a short call, “How are you?” would please them. Your workers are important resources in your business at present and for the future. They want to come back to your company and work with you after their recovery.

Sick workers and their families might face difficulties if their fight against the disease becomes long. Their food stocks, drinking water, and cash might be already used up. They would much appreciate your available material support and also moral support.

HOW TO IMPROVE

1. Regularly contact sick workers or their families by phone (Figure 5.1) or by internet (if available). Give them official sick leave. Listen to their needs in terms of treatment, or necessary materials carefully. Provide information on referral to hospitals, fever clinics.
2. You must collect updated information on the disease treatment or financial support for it. Communicate useful information to sick workers and their families.
3. Provide psychological support to sick workers and their families. Listen to their talk even if the talk is long. They will feel comfortable when someone like you can listen to them.

WAYS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION

Discuss with your workers possible support measures for sick workers. Phone calls and sending a letter with everyone’s name would be encouraging to sick workers and their families

under serious Pandemic. Before a Pandemic, the company can establish an emergency fund scheme to help staff in need and provide this financial support for sick workers.

SOME MORE HINTS

1. Before a Pandemic, advise your workers to prepare themselves for a Pandemic. Workers and their families should have sufficient stocks of cash, food, water, soap and other necessities (Figure 5.2).
2. Before a Pandemic, everybody should have flu vaccinations, although Flu vaccinations do not prevent Pandemic Influenza. However, people who have Flu vaccinations may avoid being misdiagnosed with Pandemic Influenza since they are not infected with Flu.
3. Some workers may want to go back to their home towns. Provide appropriate advice to them since the Pandemic situation might be even more serious in their home provinces.
4. Foreign, migrant workers may be working in your company. Provide sufficient information and support to them. Listen to their special needs carefully and discuss solutions.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

.....
Keep in contact with sick workers or their families and provide possible material and psychological support.

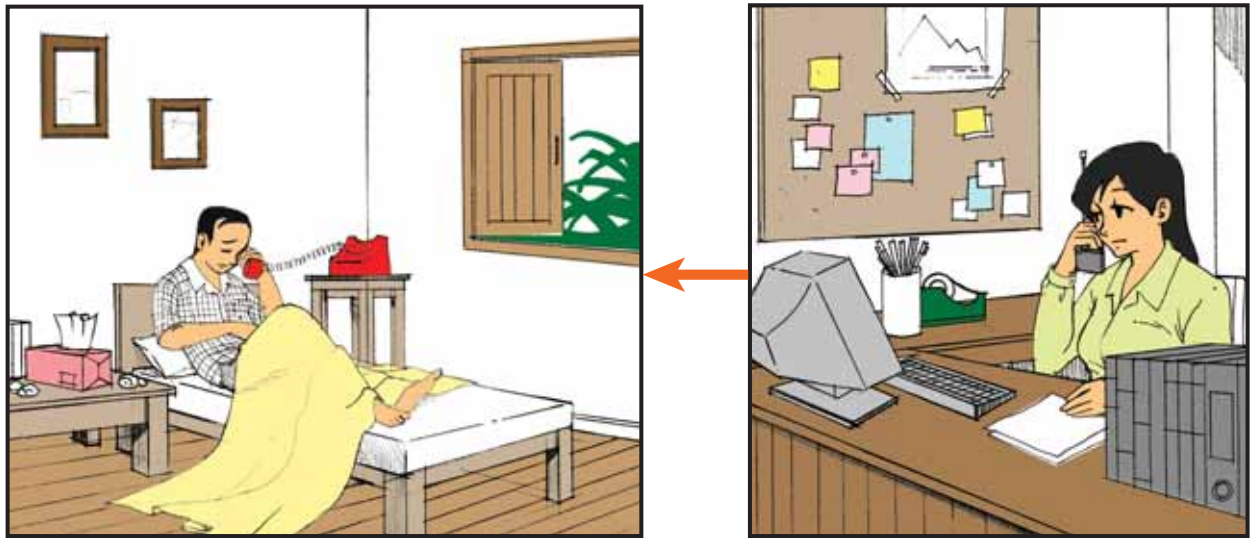


Figure 5.1 Keep in contact with sick workers and their families and provide necessary company assistance. Your regular contact would also provide moral support to them.

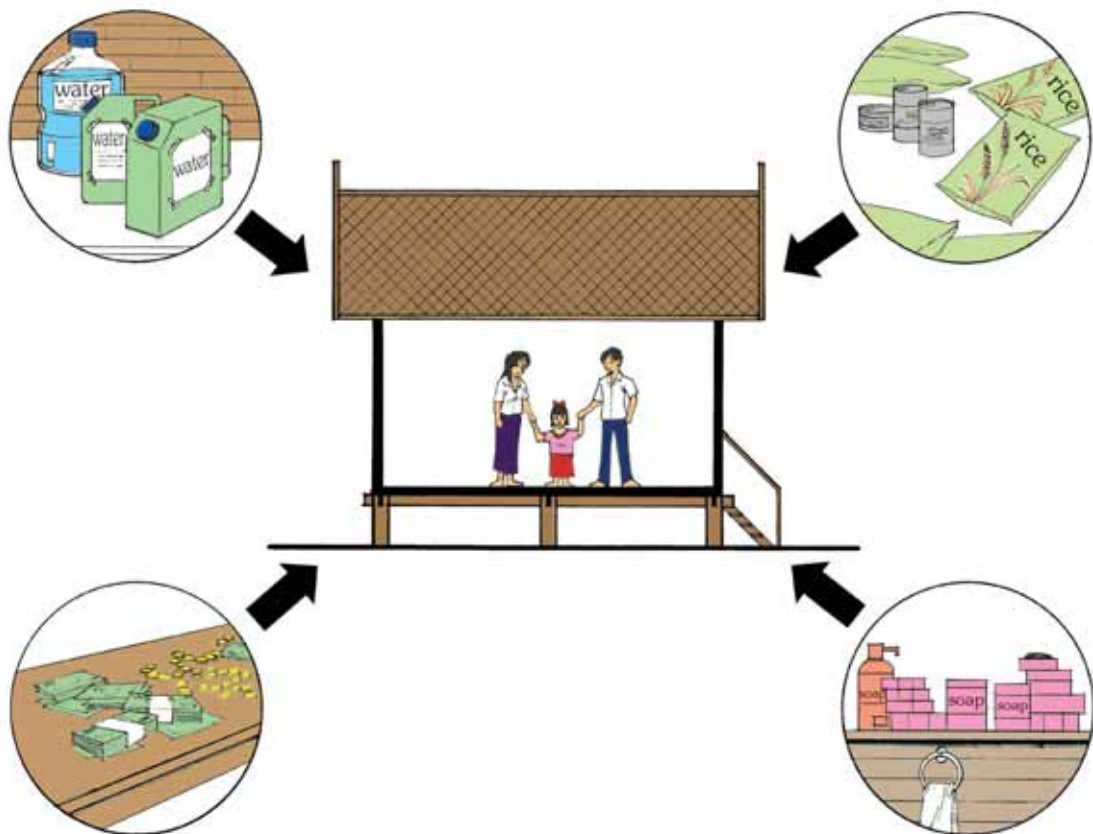


Figure 5.2 Stand-by workers and their families at home need sufficient stocks of cash, food, drinking water, soap, and other necessary materials. Their company support is important if they need to stay at home long.

Annex 1

Information sources

Bureau of Emerging Infectious Diseases
Department of Disease Control
Ministry of Public Health
Floor 4, Building 8, Tiwanond Road
Nonthaburi Province 11000
Tel: 02 590 3275
Website: <http://beid.ddc.moph.go.th>

Influenza Foundation Thailand (IFT)
630 National Housing Soi 23
Navamin Road, Khlongchan, Bangkok
Bangkok 10240
Tel: 02 703 2978
Website: <http://www.ift2004.org>

Ministry of Labour
Mitmaitree Road, Dindaeng
Bangkok 10400
Tel: 02 232 1421-2
Website: <http://www.mol.go.th>

Office of the WHO Representative to Thailand
c/o Ministry of Public Health
Tiwanond Road, Muang
Nonthaburi 11000
Tel: 02 590 1524
Website: <http://w3.whothai.org/en/index.htm>

United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC)
Asia-Pacific Regional Hub
UN OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Executive Suite, 2nd Floor, UNCC Building
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200
Tel: 02 288 1234
Website: <http://www.influenza.undg.org>, <http://un-influenza.org>

Protecting Your Employees and Business from Pandemic Human Influenza

Action manual for small and medium-sized enterprises

The outbreak of avian influenza and the ongoing incidences of infected cases have prompted worldwide concern. This training manual is developed to promote safe practices in small and medium-sized enterprises. The manual is user-friendly and practical, providing an Action Checklist on various prevention measures including explanations and descriptions. The unique participatory training methods of the ILO, Work Improvement in Small Enterprises (WISE) and Work Improvements in Neighbourhood Development (WIND), were used to promote understanding and encourage improvement in the actions of employers and workers in small and medium-sized enterprises.

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