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REVIEW OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS

Purpose

To remind councils of the importance of developing, reviewing and updating business continuity plans.

Background

In April 2007 the Department issued a circular recommending that councils ensure they have in place a well developed business continuity plan that addresses the key risks to council's continued activities and provides a well articulated plan to minimise the potential impact of these risks (*Circular to Councils 07-12 Business Continuity Plans*).

The current outbreak of a new form of influenza A (H1N1) virus acts as a timely reminder for all councils to review their business continuity plans for currency and completeness.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the swine influenza situation to be a public health event of international significance and has raised the level of pandemic alert from four (4) to five (5). Australia is now in the DELAY phase (as at 29 April 2009), which aims to delay entry of the virus into Australia using border measures, increased monitoring and escalating preparedness activities. For more information on the Australian phases see the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza 2008 at the following link:

<http://www.flupandemic.gov.au/internet/panflu/publishing.nsf/Content/ahmppi-1>

NSW Health has updated its internet site to provide specific advice to the public regarding Swine Influenza at the following link:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/swine_flu.asp

Recommended Action for Councils

While there is no immediate threat from Swine Influenza, councils are strongly encouraged to review their business continuity plans to ensure they are current and comprehensive and include plans to minimise the potential risks to council's operations arising from possible human influenza pandemics.

More Information

If councils require assistance in developing, evaluation and/or testing their business continuity plan, there are resources available including:

- Standards Australia International HB 221:2004 Business Continuity Management or HB 292 Set-2006 : Business Continuity Management Handbooks Set
- Business Continuity Guide for Australian Businesses located on the Department of Tourism and Industry website at:
<http://www.industry.gov.au/pandemicbusinesscontinuity/>.
- A copy of the NSW Human Influenza Pandemic Sub Plan can be found via the following link: www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/583.html
- Additional information regarding pandemic preparedness can be found on the NSW Health site via the following link:
www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/pandemic/index.asp

A current and comprehensive business continuity plan is essential to the long-term sustainability of councils and should be part of 'business as usual' for all councils.



Ross Woodward
Acting Director General