

## **Is your Agency Ready for an Influenza Pandemic?**

In an average year, 5 to 20 percent of the United States population will be affected by influenza and approximately 36,000 people will die from it. These outbreaks are caused by recurring viruses, that the population has built some immunity against, either naturally or through vaccination. By definition, an influenza pandemic will have more serious consequences. A pandemic exists when there is a new virus, that no one has immunity to and is easily passed from human to human. The CDC estimates that if an influenza pandemic occurs, 15 to 35 percent of the U.S. population could be affected. Individuals in the health care and first responder fields could be hardest hit, based on their increased exposure.

Is your agency prepared? Most agencies have plans to prepare for an increase in the number of runs resulting from a disaster or other event. However, agencies must also have a plan to deal with the workforce shortages that may be caused by an influenza pandemic.

There are several steps that can be taken to help prevent the spread of influenza among employees and to plan for any workforce shortages. The CDC has published several informational documents, including preparedness checklists, on their website at [www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic). The Ohio Department of Health website ([www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov)) also has updated information and links.

One of the most important things you can do to maintain your preparedness, is to maintain situational awareness and keep up with current pandemic information. To help you, the Division of EMS, will begin posting relevant information and links on our website at [www.ems.ohio.gov](http://www.ems.ohio.gov).