

## Ohio EMS and the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Pandemic

The world has seen various strains of influenza outbreaks for centuries. In April 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the emergence of H1N1, a novel strain of influenza A. By June 2009, the spread of people who had become infected with H1N1 influenza had become widespread throughout the world, and the WHO officially declared a global pandemic. A sobering fact for our emergency care system is that approximately one-third of the documented cases of H1N1 influenza in the world during 2009 have been recorded in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified specific populations that are at-risk for greater mortality and morbidity due to H1N1 influenza and which should be targeted during mass immunization campaigns. The at-risk populations identified by the CDC are health care workers, pregnant women, all people from 6 months through 24 years of age, household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age, and people aged 25 years through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

On December 30, 2004, the EMS Board promulgated a rule, Ohio Administrative Code 4765-6-03, to allow Ohio EMS personnel to provide additional services during a declared emergency by the governor that affects public health. When enacted by the governor, this rule permits the performance of immunizations and the administration of drugs or dangerous drugs by EMS personnel. On October 7, 2009, Governor Strickland officially declared an emergency that affects the public health due to the national H1N1 influenza pandemic and the additional human resources that Ohio's public health agencies will need to quickly receive, distribute, account for, and provide vaccine to as many Ohioans as possible. Governor Strickland's declaration of emergency allows only EMT-Intermediates and EMT-Paramedics who are certified under Section 4765.30 of the Ohio Revised Code to perform H1N1 immunizations and administer drugs or dangerous drugs related to the H1N1 virus provided they have received the appropriate training and are under physician medical direction. Specifically, the administration of any other immunizations (i.e. hepatitis, seasonal influenza, smallpox, or tetanus) remains outside of the Ohio EMS scope of practice.

As we have addressed the challenges that the H1N1 influenza pandemic pose for our emergency care system, the most imperative actions for our Ohio EMS personnel remain unchanged.

- ❖ All EMS personnel should be vaccinated for H1N1 influenza
- ❖ Frequent hand washing measures should be implemented for all patient and non-patient encounters
- ❖ Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be utilized for all patient encounters

This website has been created as an informational resource for Ohio EMS personnel and members of our healthcare system who have partnered with Ohio EMS personnel in the provision of patient care during the H1N1 influenza pandemic. This repository

includes general information regarding H1N1 influenza pandemic and Ohio EMS, the “*H1N1 Vaccinations for Ohio EMS Personnel*” training module, and sample protocols and guidelines that various agencies have implemented to support their EMS systems during the pandemic when resources may exceed patient needs. The repository is not meant to be all-inclusive. Additional informational resources may be required, and we encourage all within our emergency care system to explore and utilize any additional information that is available.

On behalf of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS, we are happy to provide this website as an informational resource and hope that its contents prove to be useful to all. We remain honored and privileged to serve the EMS personnel, citizens, and visitors in Ohio.

Carol A. Cunningham, M.D., FACEP, FAAEM  
State Medical Director