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# COUNTY OF DELAWARE

## GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING

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## FAQs on Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan

### Pandemic history

Everyone is familiar with influenza, or the flu, which causes seasonal epidemics of disease resulting in an average of 36,000 deaths each year in the United States. A pandemic, or significant global epidemic, occurs when there is a mutation in the influenza virus so that most of the world's population has no previous exposure and is thus vulnerable to the virus.

Three pandemics occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most severe of which, in 1918, caused over 500,000 U.S. deaths and more than 20 million worldwide.

While it's impossible to predict the evolution of a flu virus, recent outbreaks caused by avian influenza strains in Southeast Asia highlight the potential for a modern pandemic. In December, a teenager in Egypt died from avian flu after contact with poultry. So far in 2009, China has reported six cases of bird flu. There has not been a person-to-person transmission; only poultry-to-human.

In addition, lessons were learned on how to prevent the spread of a contagious illness from the SARS outbreak that happened in China in 2002 and in Canada in 2003.

### Planning process is ongoing

The current Pandemic Plan is the result of three years of development. Since 2005, the Delaware County team focused on the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) plan, which provides for mass dispensation of medications to the public in the event of a natural or manmade event.

SNS drills have been conducted at several school districts to test the plan and prepare participants.

In 2007, the County and its partners developed the first draft Pandemic Influenza Plan. Since then, the Pandemic and SNS teams have refined both plans, conducted training exercises and they meet regularly to address the latest developments in emergency response.

In the event of a pandemic, County Council would direct activation of the plan. County leadership would collaborate with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and other local and regional stakeholders to ensure an effective response.

### Preparedness, Response, Recovery

The Pandemic Plan encompasses three phases:

**Preparedness** involves public education, pre-event training and disease surveillance

**Response** details reaction to the onset of a pandemic, including continuity of governance and other essential operations, disease containment, mass medication dispensing (SNS), mass medical care and mass casualty management.

**Recovery** details efforts to return the county to stable operating conditions.

Components of the document include: incident management, public communications, law and order, surveillance, diagnostics, infection control, vaccine/anti-viral distribution, mass medical care and mass fatality management.

## **Register for Delco Alert**

One of the components of the Pandemic Plan is the county's emergency notification system, Delco Alert. Residents can register to receive emergency notifications through Delco Alert by visiting <https://delco.alertpa.org>.

There is also a section on the Delco Alert registration form that enables people to volunteer in the event of a major emergency.

"County Council provides Delco Alert to strengthen safety in our communities and to enhance the county's overall response to an emergency," Council Vice-Chair Whelan said. "We encourage our residents to sign up so they can receive alerts of major emergencies in a timely manner to prepare themselves and their families to take action."

In the event of a major emergency, every available means of communication would be utilized to direct residents on a course of action, from the traditional news media and municipal alarm systems to police and neighbor-to-neighbor warnings.