

Rapid Pandemic Preparedness Assessment

In the spring of 2009, influenza A (H1N1), a new flu variation, infected hundreds of people in Mexico. The virus quickly spread to more than 20 countries and has many experts predicting that it could become the first pandemic in more than 40 years.

Unlike regional events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or terrorist attacks, a pandemic is a recurring global event with global implications. Thus, this outbreak of influenza A (H1N1) underscores the critical importance of effective pandemic planning and response to minimize the potential for human morbidity and mortality, reduce social and economic disruptions, and mitigate against organizational risk exposures. It should be emphasized that the influenza A (H1N1) situation continues to evolve and is being monitored closely given its possible resurgence in the fall. Pandemic plans and response must include the ability to react quickly and be flexible to changing scenarios in accordance with the phase of the pandemic. The hardest hit companies in any industry are likely to be those with worldwide operations, global supply chains, and/or international customers. Furthermore, as seen with influenza A (H1N1), local, state, and national governments may curtail travel, close schools, quarantine individuals and communities, and/or ban public gatherings. While managing through the potential impacts of an outbreak may seem daunting, Marsh Risk Consulting (MRC) provides organizations with tried and tested tools, processes, and procedures that can help to protect employees, preserve revenue streams, and meet organizational resiliency objectives.

Service Highlights

MRC's Business Continuity Risk Management Practice consultants have the unique ability to integrate customized pandemic planning protocols into an organization's overall business continuity management program. Based on our support of clients' planning and response activities during and following the SARS and avian flu outbreaks, our global team has the skills and experience required to develop and implement an integrated pandemic planning protocol as well as assess performance and refine procedures in light of an actual event.

Pandemic planning, testing, and regular reviews of effectiveness can place an organization in a better position to reduce, mitigate the impact of, and recover more quickly from such socially and economically disruptive events. Additional benefits may include:

- Increased vigilance and protection of employee health and safety;
- Protection of market share, brand value, and shareholder value;
- Improved resiliency and fortification of key value drivers and resources; and

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Who it's for

An organization that:

- Has critical operations or functions which must continue and non-essential processes which must wind down in an orderly fashion
- Has single points of failure internally or externally or relies on scarce and unique skill sets
- Has not planned for a disruption of critical dependencies within its extended supply chain and/or has been classified as part of the national critical infrastructure
- Has identified the need to develop and detail, or improve and enhance, its overall pandemic preparedness capabilities
- Is subject to rules and regulations, such as SOX, HIPAA, FFIEC, FINRA, OSHA, and CIA

What you get

- Access to a full spectrum of subject matter and industry experts with insights and experience based on hundreds of pandemic planning projects
- Identification and prioritization of systemic gaps and an enhanced level of preparedness
- A plan appropriate to your culture, industry, and regulatory environment
- Clear guidance on actions to be taken to eliminate capability gaps
- Enhanced compliance with rules, regulations, audit committee requirements, and board of director expectations

- Strengthened internal business controls and risk intelligence insights.

To meet organizations' pandemic survival and resiliency planning needs, we design custom solutions. We do not force-fit organizations into plans based on pre-defined templates and checklists; rather, we tailor our industry-specific approach, tools, and knowledge base for each client. We are uniquely qualified to be a trusted risk advisor on pandemic planning and response, leveraging our deep and diverse expertise in risk management, HR consulting, and risk transfer alternatives.

Pandemic Planning Overview

In the past, business continuity management programs focused on activities inside the four walls of the organization. Given today's sophisticated business environment and intricate interdependencies, leading organizations are expanding their outlook to include upstream and downstream partner processes, and improving their risk quantification techniques to make better control decisions.

This new outlook is beneficial in relation to pandemic planning, which must include the social event (behavioral or human element of the event) and the economic event (how to keep the business going). Social concerns include the health and safety of employees, human interactions/communications during the event, and employee isolation. Economic considerations include employee recovery, loss of vendors/suppliers, and diminished customer demand.

Furthermore, physical properties and IT infrastructure will not necessarily be affected directly. However, the employees who rely on, and operate the support structure will be, particularly if recurring pandemic waves result in high levels of absenteeism either from employees' own illness or having to care for others.

Pandemic planning also requires due diligence focused on, but not limited to:

- Critical business processes and skill sets;
- The extended supply chain and public infrastructure implications;
- Medical and HR policies, and
- Insurance policy reviews.

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Additionally, the authorities will be focused on protecting responders, the general public, and the national critical infrastructure. Based on past catastrophic events, there will be limited assistance for at least the first 72 hours. Therefore, it is incumbent on the directors and officers of an organization to evaluate, adapt, develop, and implement pandemic planning protocols and measures specific to their fiduciary responsibilities and their responsibilities to their employees' health and well-being.

Rapid Pandemic Preparedness Assessment

In the wake of the influenza A (H1N1) outbreak, MRC's Business Continuity Risk Management Practice has created an offering specifically designed to assist companies with a rapid review of existing pandemic preparedness plans in order to determine their effectiveness and highlight potential gaps in the planning process. To ensure a holistic approach, Marsh professionals from clinical health, insurance, and related areas of expertise may be included in the review.

Our rapid pandemic preparedness assessment is designed to baseline an organization's current capabilities, identify any gaps, and roadmap areas for process improvement. A rapid pandemic preparedness assessment is conducted and facilitated through the following activities:

- Data collection and analysis;
- Key stakeholder interviews;
- Extended stakeholder workshop; and
- Wrap-up presentation and roadmap.

A typical rapid pandemic preparedness assessment is expected to take approximately one week, depending on the availability of management. It commences with a review of the organization's current documentation, three to five interviews with senior executives, and a roundtable workshop with key stakeholders (e.g. Pandemic Planning Committee members, business continuity leader, supply chain manager, human resources). Following an analysis of the documentation, interviews, and workshop, we deliver a recommended pandemic preparedness implementation roadmap to guide future activities, which may include development of an integrated pandemic planning protocol.