

Date: October 9, 2009

To: Non-Healthcare Businesses

From: Ronald G. Hawes, M.D. Summit County Health District Medical Advisor

Re: Use of Personal Protection Equipment in the Workplace

In areas with confirmed human cases of 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus infection, the risk for infection can be reduced through a combination of actions. No single action will provide complete protection, but an approach combining the following steps can help decrease the likelihood of transmission. These recommended actions are:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub wipe off all common surfaces used by the public and yourself.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. As much as possible, avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands. Use your elbow if a tissue is not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- People who are sick with an influenza-like illness (ILI) (fever plus at least cough or sore throat and possibly other symptoms like runny nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea) should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel, for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- Avoid close contact (i.e. being within about 6 feet) especially with persons with ILI, during this entire flu season.

Generally surgical masks (including N95 *respirators*) are **NOT** recommended for workers in **non-healthcare occupational settings for general work activities**. The following are recommended:

- workers should try to maintain a distance of 6 feet or more from the person with ILI;
- workers should keep their interactions with ill persons as brief as possible;
- the ill person should be asked to follow good cough etiquette and hand hygiene and to wear a facemask, if able, and one is available; if available and breathing is not compromised.
- workers at increased risk of severe illness from influenza infection should avoid people with ILI (possibly by temporary reassignment); and,
- where workers cannot avoid close contact with persons with ILI, some workers may choose to wear a surgical mask on a voluntary basis. Other specific measures for special healthcare circumstances can be detailed by personal physicians or infection control experts employed by the medical facility.