

Pandemic Influenza Plan

As part of the Air Liquide Group, VitalAire Canada is committed to the safety of its employees and customers. Understandably, we have received many requests for information regarding our Pandemic Influenza Plan. While some elements of our plan remain commercial-in-confidence we would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the key public elements of our plan and its progress.

This document highlights seven major components of our plan:

• **Management in Crisis**

VitalAire has reviewed our crisis management procedures to ensure their applicability to a pandemic situation. Our Crisis Management Team will be responsible for ensuring business continuity for their respective areas during an influenza pandemic. This team is comprised of our:

- President and Chief Executive Officer,
- Vice-President, Operations,
- Chief Operating Officer, Hospital Services and Medical Gases,
- Vice-President, Homecare Marketing, Sales, and Business Development,
- Director, Human Resources,
- Vice-President, Finance and
- Health, Safety and Environment Manager.

This team will meet regularly as needed with regular updates from the Pandemic Committee.

In addition to the Crisis Management Team outlined above, our Pandemic Committee is comprised of the following people:

- Product Manager, Homecare,
- Safety/Regulatory Compliance Advisor,
- Health, Safety, and Environment Manager,
- Manager, Regulatory Affairs and Quality Assurance,
- Communications Manager,
- Quality Administrator,
- Purchasing Manager,
- Regional Operations Managers and
- Vice-President, Operations.

This committee will meet a minimum on a weekly basis, until otherwise decided and will update the Crisis Management Team on a regular basis.

These individuals on the Pandemic Committee will also co-ordinate additional business activities as needed depending on the extent and severity of a pandemic.

Effective internal and external communications provide the backbone for a coordinated response to an influenza pandemic. VitalAire is committed to providing focused, timely, accurate, accessible, and concise communications to/from among four key audiences: health care workers, customers, internal audiences, and the public. There are a number of mechanisms in place now including our internal telecommunications (includes videoconferencing between regional offices), email, VitalAire intranet, VitalAire website (www.vitalaire.ca), facsimile systems, and the worldwide Air Liquide intranet. Other mechanisms include a dedicated pandemic management section on our website).

As a normal part of our Emergency Preparedness Plans across the organization, we maintain current fan-out lists to ensure we can contact local management and our employees across our 81 branches nationally in the event of an influenza pandemic.

● **Infection Prevention**

In February 2006, VitalAire began stockpiling personal protective equipment (PPE) for our employees to ensure continued service in the event of an influenza pandemic. We have secured N95 masks, gloves, and gowns for our front-line employees. We have taken additional steps to stockpile surgical masks for the rest of our employees that do not have direct contact with our customers.

VitalAire has hand washing and disinfection procedures in place and we have proactively taken steps to further increase employee awareness and access to the appropriate products. We have budgeted for an increase in hand disinfection products for employees and visitors to our facilities.

VitalAire healthcare and sales professionals visit clinics, hospitals and other healthcare institutions and attend medical conferences calling on physicians, clinic staff and healthcare stakeholders. Healthcare and sales professionals are expected to adhere to all policies of the institution and to perform hand hygiene frequently using either alcohol based hand rubs (60-90%) or soap and water before and after visiting with customers and at appropriate intervals. All sales professionals are trained on the pandemic plan and can provide a copy of the Pandemic Influenza Plan Summary Update upon request.

By nature of the healthcare services VitalAire provides in the community, we know that some of our employees are at an elevated risk of exposure to a pandemic influenza virus. We have identified those high-risk activities and are keen to work with provincial health authorities to ensure access to anti-virals (e.g. Tamiflu) for those individuals.

- **Service to Customers**

For the purposes of pandemic planning, VitalAire categorizes our oxygen customers into two general types: homecare and hospitals. It is our intention to ensure continued services to all customers in any crisis.

These services have been classified as critical and cannot be deferred or delegated. We further recognize the importance of continued supply of our products such as high pressure and liquid oxygen as being critical and will strive to maintain uninterrupted supplies during an influenza pandemic. We have used this information to develop our Critical Jobs Assignment and Replacement Plan. As such, VitalAire will take every reasonable action to ensure these services are provided during an influenza pandemic.

However, we acknowledge and are prepared for a request from provincial authorities to prioritize the publicly funded services we provide within those provinces.

During an influenza pandemic the health system must have access to adequate equipment and suppliers, and a system for purchasing, storing, and distributing those supplies. Given the quantity of equipment and supplies required during a pandemic, it will be necessary to establish some priorities. In setting priorities, VitalAire will consider the following factors: the functionality of the equipment or supply, the anticipated impact on disease transmission, availability of supply, and cost.

- **Management of Human Resources**

VitalAire is realistic that we may face restrictions on our human resources during an influenza pandemic. We are prepared to increase the capacity of each of our dedicated filling facilities by operating 3 shifts, 7 days a week. Air Liquide Canada also maintains a contingency stock of medical gases and has VitalAire categorized as a priority 'must deliver' customer in the event production levels could not be maintained to meet demand. This combination allows VitalAire to increase our ability to package and deliver medical gases to our customers significantly in the event of a crisis.

The organization is prepared to make the necessary sudden change to our Leave Policy in the event of a pandemic, ensuring the appropriate resources are available wherever possible. Acknowledging that some of VitalAire health care professionals are also engaged part-time in hospital based employment, we are prepared to put into place measures to mitigate our risks in the event of an influenza pandemic to minimize the risk of transmission to both employees and patients.

In preparation for a community crisis, however, we believe in the need to balance the peak in demand for medical oxygen with the other gas products we supply to our customers. This focus on medical oxygen will allow us to use our resources more appropriately.

Preparations have also been made to severely restrict our existing travel policy during an influenza pandemic.

VitalAire has reviewed the role of various employee functions to determine who is at risk for potential exposure to the pandemic influenza virus and the severity of the associated harm. This analysis will be used when making decisions about access to protective equipment, critical job assignments, replacement plans, etc.

- **Management of Geography**

VitalAire will employ a progressive management approach depending on the geographical nature of an influenza pandemic. In the event of a localized outbreak, resources will continue to be allocated on a national basis. Should outbreaks be numerous, our current plan calls for restriction of physical resources to provincial circuits wherever possible to ensure maximum availability within each province.

- **Management of Physical Resources**

VitalAire maintains appropriate resources for normal services, including predictable peaks. Further, as part of the Air Liquide Group (the world's largest supplier of medical and industrial gases) we believe we are well placed in the event of a crisis. VitalAire can, however, engage in specific contracts for "strategic reserves" for those customers seeking dedicated peak supply.

- **International Approach**

Air Liquide Group companies internationally are preparing for a possible pandemic. Planning is advanced (particularly within the healthcare subsidiaries) and involves the coordination of national and international resources based on Air Liquide's strengths in Medical Gases, Homecare (VitalAire), and Hygiene through its disinfectant manufacturing facilities in Europe.

Our Pandemic Influenza Plan continues to evolve as we watch the changing situation throughout the world. The resources in our plan and our implementation will depend on the "criticality" of the situation as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). At this time, in addition to senior level management involvement in VitalAire's planning, we have two long-term employees focusing on the continuing development of our plan. These resources will evolve as needed.