

**IAFC / EMS Section Avian Flu Task Force**

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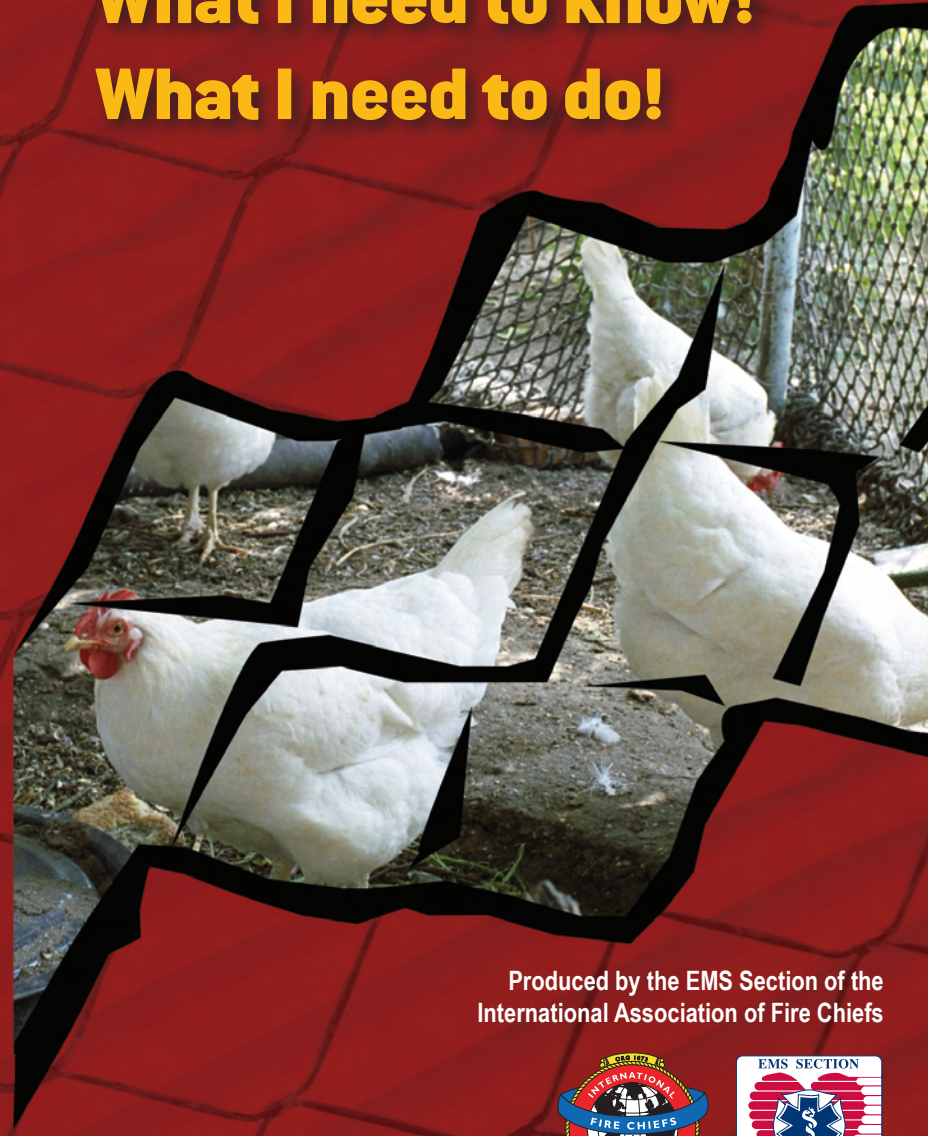


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*The recommendations and opinions expressed in  
this document are those of IAFC. The document was  
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**Avian (bird) flu**  
**PREPARATION AND RESPONSE**

**What I need to know!**  
**What I need to do!**



Produced by the EMS Section of the  
International Association of Fire Chiefs





## Key Facts About Influenza and Avian Influenza

**What is avian influenza (bird flu)?** It is an influenza type A virus normally found in wild birds, and does not normally make them sick. When the virus infects domestic poultry, the disease and death rates are very high. There are several different types of viruses in birds, but the current major concern is the H5N1 strain.

**Do bird viruses infect humans?** Not normally, but there have been **115 cases** confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as of Sept. 22, 2005, **resulting in 59 deaths.**

**Have there been any cases of human to human transmission?** To date, the known cases are the result of infected poultry to human contact. No human to human cases have been confirmed. The fear is that an existing virus will mutate, recombine or re-assort and become infectious between humans. If this occurs, there will be no one with immunity.

**How does bird flu spread?** Infected birds shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Susceptible birds get the virus after coming in contact with contaminated secretions. It is believed that infections in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.

**What is the risk to humans from bird flu?** The risk is generally low for most humans because the viruses occur mainly in birds and do not usually infect humans. The current outbreak of avian influenza in poultry in Asia is an example of an outbreak that has caused human illness and death. In these situations, humans should avoid contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces and be careful when handling and cooking poultry.

**Is there a vaccine to protect humans from the H5N1 virus?** There is currently no vaccine to protect humans against the H5N1 virus. Vaccine development continues, and several pharmaceutical companies are working vigorously to create one.

**What is being done in the United States to address the potential spread of bird flu?** Since early 2004, the federal government has restricted the import of poultry from the identified countries with infection. The CDC has been working with HHS to develop a federal plan to use in the event the virus changes and creates a pandemic. Several federal agencies are working to create a stockpile of antiviral drugs and to improve capacities. Funding has increased to assist with research, testing, surveillance and purchases as part of prevention and preparedness activities.



## General signs and symptoms of typical influenza and avian influenza cases to date.

### Typical Influenza:

- Fever, cough, sore throats
- General malaise
- Muscle aches
- Upper respiratory infection

### Avian Influenza includes typical influenza signs and symptoms, plus:

- Eye infections
- Severe respiratory complications
- Pneumonia
- Life threatening complications

## Resources for additional information:

- **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDC]** [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) or [www.cdc.gov/mmwr](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr)
- **U.S. State Department** [www.state.gov/g/oes/avianflu](http://www.state.gov/g/oes/avianflu)
- **World Health Organization [WHO]** [www.who.int/csr/disease](http://www.who.int/csr/disease)
- **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS] National Vaccine Program** [www.hhs.gov/nvpo/pandemics](http://www.hhs.gov/nvpo/pandemics)
- **United Kingdom: Health Protection Agency** [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)
- **National Institutes of Health: National Library of Medicine** [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

## What can my department do to be prepared for the potential influenza pandemic?

- Provide the annual flu vaccine to all members.
- Meet with your local health department to determine the role of public safety in the local plan.
- Make sure the department is part of the information exchange throughout the process.
- Inventory and maintain adequate supplies of personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, disinfectants, etc.
- Meet with your local hospitals to determine if there are planned changes for the delivery and disposition of patients displaying symptoms during an epidemic or pandemic.
- Meet with your agency medical director to determine if patient protocols need to be developed or altered to address an epidemic/pandemic.
- Administratively, review your routine staffing patterns and develop contingency plans to incorporate high levels of absenteeism during an epidemic/pandemic.
- Constantly monitor changes and communicate those of significance to your personnel.

## What can I do to be prepared for the potential influenza pandemic?

- **Get an annual flu shot for yourself and your family to reduce the chance of influenza infection.**
- Understand how viruses are transmitted and practice prevention techniques at home and at work.
- Identify the groups in your community that are at risk for influenza, as designated by the CDC.
- Practice good hand washing and cough hygiene at all times.
- Maintain and use all protective equipment and supplies when appropriate.
- Keep abreast of changes locally, regionally, nationally and worldwide.
- Be an ambassador for influenza health and information to your family and friends.
- Have a plan for your family if a pandemic occurs.

