



DHSS H1N1 Pandemic Influenza: Preparedness and Response Efforts February 10, 2010

Background

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) served as the State of Alaska's lead agency in coordinating the response to the nationwide H1N1 novel influenza pandemic. Novel H1N1 was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009 and spread from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization signaled that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 flu was underway. H1N1 is highly contagious, and though it does not currently cause severe illness in the average person, like the seasonal flu it can be serious or fatal to those with underlying medical conditions such as asthma. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services issued a National Public Health Emergency Declaration in April, and the World Health Organization has raised the pandemic designation to the highest phase (Phase 6) indicating global spread of the disease.

Preparedness and Response Activities

- DHSS Emergency Operations Center activated in April 2009 to gather information on H1N1, disseminate that information to local, state, federal, tribal, and private industry partners and healthcare providers, and provide recommendations to healthcare providers and the general public on how to prepare for the virus.
- During the spring activation the DHSS Emergency Operations Center sent 25 percent of the state's antiviral and personal protective equipment stockpile out to 39 hub sites around the state. These sites included Public Health Centers and tribal health system facilities. The State also received 25 percent of their allotment of materials from the Strategic National Stockpile which backfilled the state stockpile that was sent out.
- DHSS Emergency Operations Center was deactivated at the end of May 2009 from the spring response and activated its H1N1 Task Force in preparation for vaccine distribution and administration; community containment; public information and education; community outreach; surveillance and antiviral stockpile and use. DHSS conducted community outreach workshops in 19 of 23 hub communities in the summer in preparation for the fall flu response.
- The DHSS Emergency Operations Center was fully activated in late September 2009 for vaccine distribution and administration operations.
- The DHSS Emergency Operations Center began weekly healthcare partner and community partner update teleconferences to give medical providers and local government officials the latest information on H1N1.
- DHSS received all H1N1 Vaccine at Vaccine Depot where DHSS and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium warehouse staff repackaged vaccine and shipped it out to public health centers, regional Tribal Health organizations, pharmacies, and private providers. To date Alaska has received 303,380 doses of H1N1 vaccine with 225,810 of those distributed throughout the state. Of the amount distributed, 128,516 doses have been administered.
- To date, Alaska has had 832 hospitalizations and 12 deaths related to novel H1N1 influenza.
- The Joint Information Center was activated throughout the event to provide information on H1N1 and state response activities to the media and general public through press releases, media interviews, public service announcements, and community outreach events. Translations were provided and included Spanish, Yupik and Inuit.
- To date DHSS has conducted 145 Mass Vaccination clinics that were based in public health centers, schools and community centers to administer the H1N1 vaccine to the Alaskan public.

- DHSS has a stockpile of medical supplies to support communities when all supply chains are exhausted. DHSS Stockpile Inventory: 118 ventilators; 78,680 doses of antiviral medication; 680,000 masks; 133,676 pairs surgical gloves; 50,000 3oz bottles hand sanitizer. Stockpile Tamiflu was offered to pharmacies and providers for uninsured or underinsured who were ill with H1N1.

Figure 1: Positive influenza test results reported by the Alaska State Virology Laboratory in Fairbanks (using PCR and culture techniques) by Week, 2009–10.

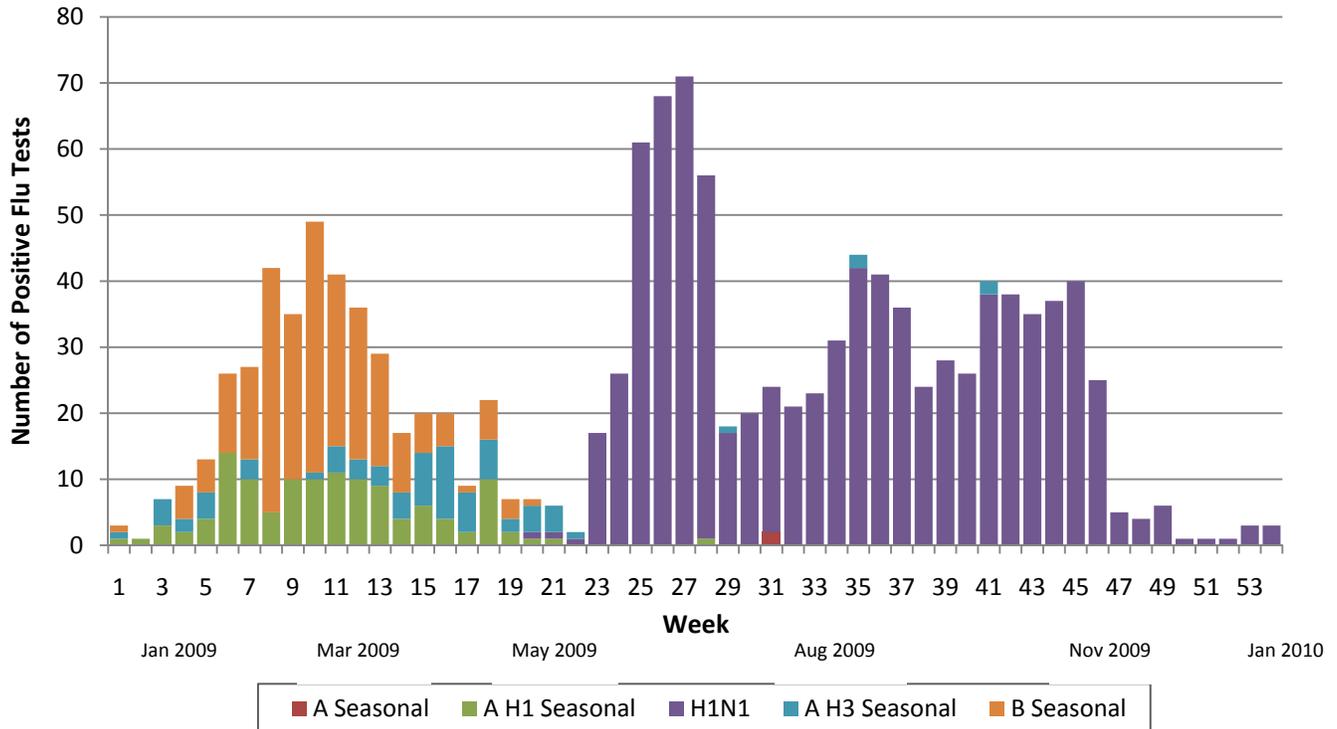


Figure 2: Unloading Styrofoam shipping boxes at the Epidemiology Depot. These boxes were used to ship H1N1 influenza vaccine around the state. (Photo taken 9/11/2009)

