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Multnomah County Health Department targets local businesses for pandemic flu planning

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Multnomah County Health Department is reaching out to every business registered in the county offering resources to plan for a pandemic or other emergency.

“The importance of business preparedness in any emergency cannot be understated. We know that many small and medium-size businesses never reopen after a major emergency. While it is unknown when the next influenza pandemic may occur, the health department is asking businesses to prepare,” says Lillian Shirley, Multnomah County Health Department Director.

According to the Small Business Resource, up to twenty-five percent of small and medium-sized businesses do not recover after a major emergency. An influenza pandemic can disrupt the community by causing high levels of illness and death. As many as fifty percent of working adults might be unable to work or go about their usual activities because of illness or caring for others who are ill. Ancillary business services, such as suppliers, transportation services, and communications may also face disruptions.

Multnomah County Health Department is distributing a resource pamphlet to every registered business license holder in the county in an effort to ramp up education and preparation activities. The pamphlet also refers business owners to the health department’s pandemic flu resource website located at www.mchealth.org/panflu.

The website includes information for individuals, families, and community-based organizations. Resources for businesses include sample emergency plans; call down lists, training materials, materials for employees to share with their families, informational presentations, and many other tools.