Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department

Pandemic Preparedness

For CERTs: Information about Avian (bird) flu

What is Avian flu?
Avian flu has killed hundreds of thousands of birds in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Near East. It can infect any bird species, including domestic birds. Migratory fowl can carry the virus without showing symptoms of disease, and transmit the disease to domesticated birds. The virus has infected some humans, but most of those who have been infected have had close contact with infected birds, bird products or bird feces.

Why is there concern about Avian flu outbreak?
As of January 2008, the World Health Organization has reported 357 cases of Avian flu in humans. Over half of the humans who have been infected have died[1]. It is not easy to transmit Avian flu from birds to humans, but each time transmission occurs and a human is infected, the virus has a new chance to mutate into a strain that could be passed person-to-person. If this occurs, Avian flu could easily be brought into the United States by an infected human carrier who is not yet showing symptoms of infection. This new virulent strain of flu could spread rapidly and there would be little to no immunity in the human population, causing a pandemic, or a widespread outbreak.

What can I do to be prepared?
As of January 2008, Avian flu has not been detected in the United States and has not been transmitted person-to-person. However, because of the risks involved, it is important to prepare now for a pandemic. Pandemicflu.gov has excellent information and resources on how you and your family can be prepared. If there is a pandemic outbreak, it may become necessary to stay in your house for an extended period of time to avoid contamination. Events that entail large gatherings may be cancelled or postponed as measure of infection control. Pandemicflu.gov outlines the most important things to know, and the best ways to prepare for a pandemic outbreak. Preparation includes having enough food, water, prescription medications, toiletries, medical supplies and other daily necessities on hand to last you and your family at least two weeks. It is also important to practice proper hygiene and hand washing, and to remain as healthy as possible by eating well and exercising regularly.[2]

In regards to Avian flu pandemic, what is my job as a CERT member?
As a CERT member, you can help spread information to the community members about how they can be prepared for a pandemic before a one occurs. If a pandemic occurs, the best action to take is to secure yourself and your loved ones, stay at home and avoid public places. Listen to news, radio, and other media channels to learn further directions from health and government officials. Community action will depend on where the outbreak has occurred, and how many have been infected. However, you can trust that the directions you are given will be in your best interest, as well as in the best interest of the community.

1. WHO Report. http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2008_01_29/en/index.html
2. A list of other websites and resources can be found on the Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department website at lpfire.org