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## **Previous flu drills help Scottsdale Healthcare prepare for pandemic**

*Hospital officials closely monitoring swine flu outbreak*

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (April 28, 2009) -- Scottsdale Healthcare's experience with flu-scenario disaster drills help keep it prepared for the possibility of a flu pandemic. Hospital officials are closely monitoring updates from Arizona and federal health authorities and following recommended public health guidelines.

In April 2007, hundreds of simulated patients with avian flu symptoms were seen at the Scottsdale Healthcare hospitals. The drill was held in response to heightened concerns over a possible bird flu pandemic as part of the second Coyote Crisis Campaign.

The hospitals simulated triaging flu patients, screened employees and physicians entering the hospitals, and enacted access control points. Hospital visitors that day were asked to pass through simulated flu screenings and receive educational material on flu.

The exercise tested readiness and collaboration among hospitals, business, academic institutions, military and government, including health agencies at the county, state and federal levels.

"While caring for patients is our priority, communication and collaboration with government health agencies, first responders, and others plays a large role in a pandemic response," said Nancy Hicks-Arsenault, RN, director of emergency services at Scottsdale Healthcare.

"The exercise helped determine how participants would deal with a pandemic flu, and how they would interact with others in the community to help get through such an unprecedented public health emergency," said Hicks-Arsenault.

A flu disaster drill held in 2006 activated the hospitals' emergency operations centers to manage and conduct mass immunizations of hospital employees.

As Scottsdale's largest employer, Scottsdale Healthcare also must plan to maintain its work force, supply chain, utilities and myriad other details for business continuity during a disaster. It's an issue that will affect employers of all sizes in a similar emergency.

During a pandemic, up to 40% of employees may not be available for work at any business. This includes those who are sick, taking care of ill family or purposely staying home to avoid contact with the virus.

The concept of "social distancing," avoiding crowds of people, may be implemented. Telecommuting or working from home would be encouraged for well employees. Schools would be closed, sporting and other events cancelled, in hopes of stemming spread of the flu.

"As the Northeast Valley's only locally-based hospital system, it is our job to anticipate potential crisis situations, analyze our response and create ways to improve our disaster preparedness for the health and safety of our community. That includes collaborating with our fellow hospitals, government, business and other partners to prepare for the unthinkable," said Tom Sadvary, president and CEO of Scottsdale Healthcare.

Scottsdale Healthcare ([www.shc.org](http://www.shc.org)) is the not-for-profit parent organization of Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn Medical Center, Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center, Scottsdale Healthcare Thompson Peak Hospital, Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center, Scottsdale Clinical Research Institute, TGen Clinical Research Services at Scottsdale Healthcare, Scottsdale Healthcare Home Health Services, Scottsdale Healthcare Community Health Services, NOAH Clinics and Scottsdale Healthcare Foundation. Scottsdale Healthcare ER wait times are updated every three minutes at [www.fastERTimes.org](http://www.fastERTimes.org).