



## PUBLIC ADVISORY

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For Immediate Release  
May 2, 2009

BC Ambulance Service

### **PARAMEDICS PREPARED FOR H1N1 FLU VIRUS**

VICTORIA – The BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) is taking the potential risk of H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) to our paramedics and patients very seriously and recommending that staff take the highest level of precaution and protection.

Personal protective gear such as masks and respirators, gloves, eyewear and gowns are all standard-issue equipment and all paramedics have been encouraged to use these items to ensure their safety when treating patients with flu-like symptoms. BCAS has expedited ongoing 'fit-testing' of respirators, completing up to 230 tests per day since the H1N1 flu virus was identified, to ensure that protective equipment is as effective as possible. Paramedics should also apply surgical masks to patients with fever and a cough during treatment and transport to hospital.

Processes in BCAS dispatch centres were changed immediately to better identify potential cases and ensure responding paramedics were given the best advance information possible while enroute to a call with a patient reporting flu-like illness.

On April 22, BCAS issued the first communication to staff about the status of the H1N1 flu virus and continues to provide clear information and advice about how they can protect themselves against infectious illness.

BCAS is encouraging the public to do the following to protect health care workers, such as paramedics, and their friends, families and colleagues and to prevent spreading the H1N1 flu virus and other viruses:

- Stay home from work or school if you are sick, regardless of whether you have travelled, and limit contact with others.
- See a health care provider if your symptoms become worse but call ahead of time to let them know you have fever or cough.
- Exercise commonsense precautionary measures such as:
  - washing your hands often with soap and water, particularly after coughing or sneezing,
  - covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze,
  - throwing used tissues in the garbage immediately, and
  - coughing into your sleeve instead of your hands whenever possible.

If you are feeling ill or have more questions, you can speak to a nurse by calling HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information on how to protect yourself from influenza and how to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus, visit [www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu](http://www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu).

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Contact: Chris Harbord  
BCAS Communications  
250 953-3651