

## AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) PREPAREDNESS

While the likelihood and consequences of an Avian Influenza pandemic occurring are receiving vigorous debate by governments and health authorities, all international companies are making prudent Emergency Response and Business Continuity preparations for 'denial of people' as opposed to traditional denial of physical assets. Emergency Response seeks to minimize potential risk to employees in the workplace while Business Continuity contingency planning allows for up to 30% absenteeism for three months.

**CORPORATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE** Most plans have the aim of increasing the awareness of all managers and staff as to how the organization will align its response to global levels of alert and how it will provide a safe working place for all employees under pandemic conditions. Note that typical government response strategies are based upon initial containment with a fallback to maintenance of essential services if containment falls.

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY** How much resilience is enough? In likelihood terms, there is a possibility that Avian Influenza will be a Y2K equivalent, however like terrorism the consequences are far harder to predict. As a bare minimum, companies are planning for 10%, 20% and 30% absenteeism for one, two and three months until a vaccine is developed and distributed.

**Advise** clients that the organization is conducting active contingency planning to minimize the risk of potential disruptions and note the potential business advantage that such planning may have over competitors.

**Complete** the 'percentage absenteeism by time' matrix for all major working locations, offices and assets, in order to establish the 'pain point' and a 'breaking point'.

**Determine** who are the critical people and the trades that are vital to the continuation of operations under pandemic conditions, and what internal redundancy exists across the organization. Determine any contractual employment restrictions that may prevent the redeployment of manpower to other locations.

**Determine** who are the critical internal and external service providers and the impacts of their absenteeism on the organization. Determine the scope for 24/7 employee flexibility in working at work. Determine the minimum holdings of masks to be procured in advance.

**Determine** who can work from home now for extended periods. Determine what additional laptops and bandwidth are required for additional employees to work from home.

**Determine** what streamlining of financial delegations and approvals can occur. Determine the format of an absentee report to enable the organization to make manpower decisions during the course of the pandemic. Establish a small Business Continuity Team to champion the project, report back and to test the plan well before mid 2006.

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