



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, HEALTH DIRECTOR, ADJUTANT GENERAL
DETAIL HAWAI'I'S EFFORTS TO RESPOND TO PANDEMIC FLU**

**New report highlights need for increased pandemic preparedness;
State unveils plan to increase public awareness**

HONOLULU – Hawai'i could be among the hardest hit states if a flu pandemic were to develop, according to a new report from the Trust for America's Health, a non-profit organization dedicated to making disease prevention a national priority. The report, "Pandemic Flu and the Potential For U.S. Economic Recession" ranks Hawai'i as second in the nation behind Nevada in potential economic losses.

Global health experts cite pandemic flu as one of the greatest known threats to human health. It is caused by a new, deadly flu virus that evolves to spread easily from person to person. Although rare, flu pandemics have happened throughout history and are likely to happen again.

"This report highlights the need for businesses and families to be prepared for public health emergencies like pandemic influenza (flu)," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr.. In recent years, the State of Hawai'i, federal and local agencies and private businesses have developed preparedness plans that include health emergencies such as pandemic flu and other diseases. This report reinforces the need for us to continue our efforts to work collaboratively with the business community and inform the public. In an influenza pandemic, we will need everyone to work together and be part of the solution".

Since the first cases of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian or bird flu were detected in China in 1997, health officials worldwide have been actively planning a response. An emergency appropriation of \$6.3 million by the 2006 Hawai'i State Legislature enabled the State of Hawai'i Department of

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Health to continue implementing its emergency response plan and begin informing the public about health threats like pandemic influenza. The appropriation ends June 30, 2007.

“The Hawai‘i State Department of Health is already stepping up its efforts to educate the public about pandemic flu and work with the business community – so everyone knows what to expect in an emergency and what they can do to protect themselves and their families” said State Department of Health Director Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D..

Lt. Governor Aiona, Health Director Fukino, and State Adjutant General Major General Robert Lee also announced a new “Share Aloha, Not Germs” public information campaign that begins next week. The campaign reflects new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) asking states to focus on individual health and hygiene measures and emergency preparedness planning.

Share Aloha, Not Germs Campaign

The “Share Aloha, Not Germs” campaign, set to run March through June, aims to increase awareness of the pandemic threat and improve public health emergency preparedness. At its core are television, radio newsprint, and bus ads with simple steps individuals can take at home, work or school to stay healthy and safe. It also includes informational brochures, posters and emergency planning workbooks for families.

“Global, national and local health experts agree that we are at risk for an influenza pandemic. We hope it never happens but stories about avian (bird) flu have us all wondering what we can do to protect the health and safety of ourselves and our families. With this comprehensive campaign, we hope to answer this question” said Director Fukino.

To help spread the word, a *Plan to Be Ready* handbook will be distributed to O‘ahu households through Midweek magazine on March 28, Board of Water Supply payment locations and Department of Labor One-Stops statewide and select employers.

A full list of locations is available online at www.hawaii.gov/health/panflu or by calling Aloha United Way’s 2-1-1 hotline. Information about the campaign is also posted online at www.hawaii.gov/health.

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