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## WVDHHR urges providers and public to watch for swine flu

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources issued an alert today to local health departments and other health care providers to be on the watch for swine influenza in humans.

While no cases have been identified in West Virginia at this time, 40 cases of swine flu have been confirmed in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Swine flu cases have been confirmed in California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio and New York. As of today, Mexico reports 1,600 confirmed cases with 100 deaths associated with the virus. To date, disease seen in US cases has been less severe than that seen in Mexico.

“In this situation, it’s important to plan forward,” said Cathy Slemple, M.D., M.P.H., acting state health officer and director of the Center for Threat Preparedness. Public health officials worked over the weekend to activate their response plans. “We are tracking the national situation; sharing information with providers, response partners, and the public; and actively looking for swine flu cases here. The public should not be surprised when we find a case,” Slemple said. Guidance to communities when cases appear will be based on the specifics of those early cases and the status of disease spread in the community. “Expect that different locales may need to take different measures based on local conditions. Again, we are fortunate that current disease looks similar to what we see with seasonal flu,” Slemple added.

At present, there are many things people can and should do to make a difference. These are the same things that make a difference with seasonal flu. People should frequently wash hands, cough or sneeze into their arm or sleeve (not hands) and avoid touching eyes, mouth, or nose. Avoiding large crowds when possible is also advisable. Ill individuals should stay at home and not go to work or school.

Swine flu is not transmitted by food. A person cannot get swine influenza from eating pork products.

The situation is changing rapidly. For the most current information, check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> or the WVBPH website at <http://www.wvdep.org>.