

VIEWS &amp; INFORMATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORKPLACE SAFETY




## Influenza Health and Safety

### How to Prevent and Respond to Occupational Influenza Exposure

**Brenda Thompson**

***OEHSC, Compliance Support***

For most healthy adults, seasonal flu is generally not life-threatening – but flu pandemics are something else. Pandemics often involve new strains of virus to which people have not developed immunity. New strains can spread quickly and widely and can be more of a health threat than seasonal flu. That is why it is important to know about flu pandemics and how to prepare for them.

#### What is the flu and how do people catch it?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus, commonly known as the “flu.” The flu can cause mild to severe illness and can potentially be life-threatening to especially susceptible populations.

Flu outbreaks usually occur every winter. Some people get very sick and a few may die. Most people experience only mild symptoms, and they recover fairly quickly – usually within a few days or so.

The most recent strain of flu, known as swine flu, began in pigs. Swine flu is caused by the H1N1 virus. Initially the H1N1 virus affected only animals, but over time, the virus has changed or mutated and now is seen in humans as well.

Vaccines are available for seasonal flu and, more recently, for H1N1. There are also antiviral drugs that can help prevent infection or minimize symptoms in the early stages of infection.

The severity and symptoms of infection depend on many factors, including an individual’s state of health prior to infection and the strength of influenza strain. Other factors, such as the age of the infected person and a compromised immune system can affect the severity as well.

#### INSIDE

Occupational Flu Exposure

OEHSC Hosts Portal Site to Committees for Continuous Improvement

Form SH-900.1 Illness and Injury Reports

OEHSC Employee Profile

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**Vol. 8, Issue 1**

(Continued page 4)



## OEHSC Hosts the Continuous Improvement Committees' Site on DEP's SharePoint Portal

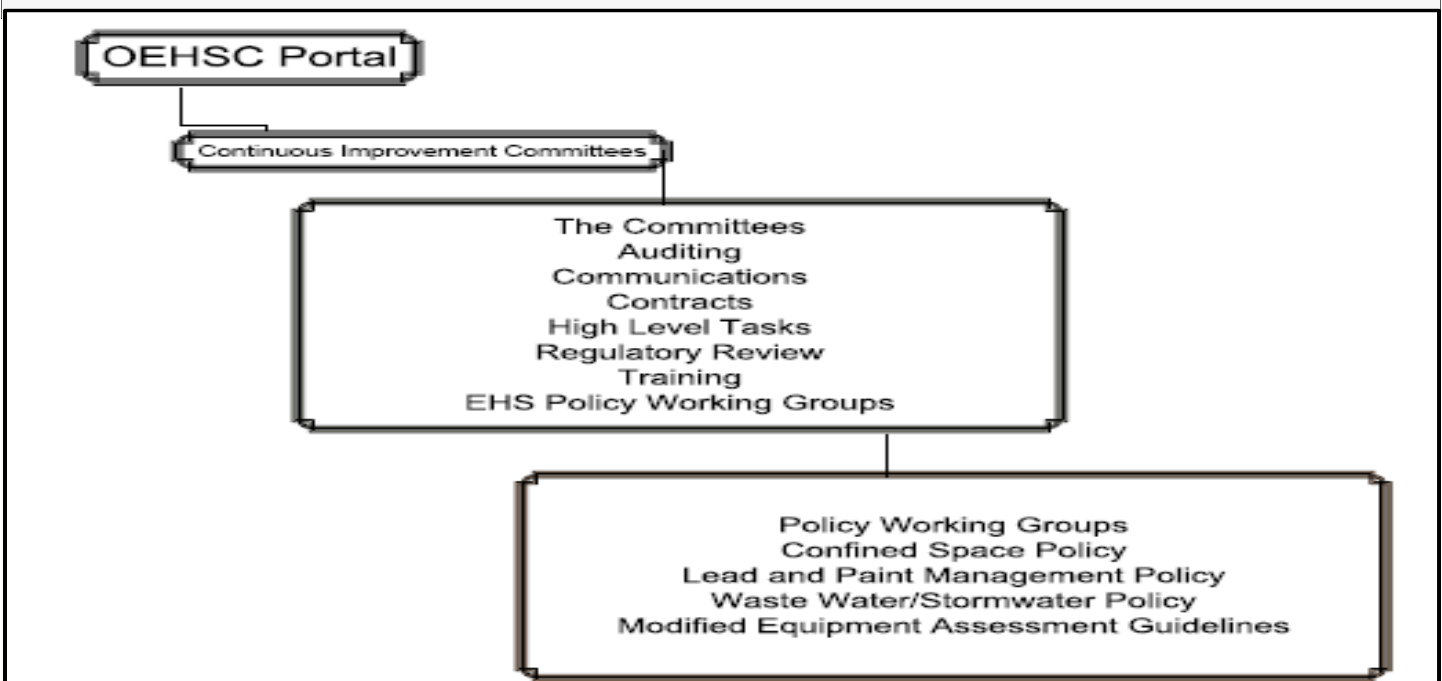
OEHSC has created and sponsored a new multi-committee page on its portal site to accommodate the communication needs of the newly constituted **Committees for Continuous Improvement (CIC)** at DEP. Working closely with Christopher Smith, Bernadette McCallion, and Shinique Edwards of the SharePoint Group, OEHSC representatives defined the architecture required to meet the needs of the seven newly constituted Continuous Improvement Committees.

The SharePoint Group built a multi-page collaborative workspace to facilitate the quick and easy exchange of ideas and documents. The CIC home site hosts a page and a dedicated document library for each committee. Announcements, calendar items, tasks, and other information resources are centrally stored on the CIC home site and are visible on every committee page. The seven committees' pages are:

- |                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Auditing,                 | Communications,   |
| Contracts                 | High Level Tasks, |
| Regulatory Review         | Training          |
| EHS Policy Working Groups |                   |

EHS Policy Working Groups has a distinct multiple sub-site with sections dedicated to each policy group: Confined Space; Lead and Paint Management; Waste Water/Stormwater; and Modified Equipment Assessments Guidance.

The site is accessible and useable by committee and group members only, who can exchange documents, and post meeting dates, announcements, and policy reviews relevant to each committee's area of responsibility. The CIC page hosted by OEHSC facilitates the rapid and efficient exchange of information between committee members and among sub-committees.





## OEHSC Employee Profiles

**Galina Dreyzina, Legacy Program Engineer**

Galina came to OEHSC in 2009 with a diverse background in environmental monitoring, hazardous waste management, environmental health and safety compliance, laboratory quality assurance, and programming/administrative experience. She graduated from Moscow State University in 1995 with a combined BS and MS in hydrology. She continued her education at Dubna International University from 2000 until 2002, studying System Analysis and Programming.

In her home country Russia, she served as a Research Associate at the Water Quality Control Laboratory in Beloretsk, the Water Quality Control Laboratory of Tschebeklinsky Chemical Industrial Complex, and Moscow State University, Department of Hydrology, where she specialized in water quality analysis, and participated in a study on the influence of toxic wastewater discharges on surface water quality. On the administrative side, she was a computer programmer at Forsazh Inc, Moscow and later an engineer–software developer at the Joint Institute of Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia.

In 2007, she joined Creative Environment Solution Corporation (CES) in New York as an Environmental Specialist. Starting 2008, she also became a Quality Assurance Officer for the new CES Analytical Laboratory. At CES, she worked on several NYC initiatives, including the MTA Bridges and Tunnels Asbestos and Lead Abatement Projects at the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel; prepared closeout reports for the NYC Transit Subway Stations Re-Painting projects; prepared Emergency Prevention and Lead Safety Placards for station distribution, and coordinated OSHA compliance monitoring.

Galina first worked for DEP as a member of the Consultant On-Call Environmental Testing Services where her tasks ranged from sample collection to report writing. She is a licensed NYS Asbestos Inspector, Project Monitor, and Air Technician, and holds various certificates in Environmental, Health and Safety procedures

Galina enjoys challenging tasks and learning new ways to engage her knowledge and experience in environmental issues as she strives to achieve the best professional results in her work.

**OEHSC Publishes Annual Summary of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses****SH-900.1 Reports for 2009**

In compliance with the New York State Department of Labor Public Employees Safety and Health (PESH) regulations, DEP posts the annual summary of occupational injuries and illnesses (SH 900.1 record) in each facility in a conspicuous location from February 1, 2010 to April 30, 2010.

In addition to the requirements of the PESH mandate, the respective bureau records may also be found on DEP's intranet, **Pipeline**, at: Health & Safety, Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, Injury and Illness Investigation and Record Keeping, Form SH-900.1 Reports ([http://pipeline/subsections/health\\_and\\_safety/pdf/illness\\_and\\_injury/SH900\\_1\\_2009\\_report\\_list\\_020810.pdf](http://pipeline/subsections/health_and_safety/pdf/illness_and_injury/SH900_1_2009_report_list_020810.pdf)).

These same records have also been posted on the NYC Environmental Protection SharePoint Portal, under Bureaus & Offices, OEHSC, Compliance Support, **Shared Documents**, Form SH-900.1 Report Injury and Illness where they can be easily reviewed and retrieved.

(Continued from page 1)

Individuals with special medical conditions should contact their medical providers for specific guidance regarding the flu.

### How is the flu transmitted?

The flu is primarily spread when infected people cough or sneeze on others. However flu viruses can also be transmitted by touching objects that an infected person has touched. The virus gets on the sick person's hands when he or she coughs or sneezes into them. From there, flu virus gets onto the objects that the person touches. Some flu viruses can live on surfaces, such as door handles, phones, keyboards, kitchen counters, and tools, for several hours. When someone else touches the same object, the virus gets onto his/her hands. If they touch their nose, mouth, or eyes, they may become infected and become ill too. Shaking hands with contagious people is a possible cause of infection as well.

The flu usually comes on suddenly and may include these initial symptoms: high fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, stomach upset such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. If you experience any flu symptoms during a flu pandemic, see a doctor.

### Watch for Worsening Symptoms

Initial symptoms might quickly turn into more severe symptoms and complications such as pneumonia. Worsening symptoms include high fever getting higher, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, bluish skin, shaking chills, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, confusion, inability to move an arm or leg, and severe or persistent vomiting. Call your doctor *immediately* if you experience any of these symptoms. Call 911 if you can't get in touch with your doctor.

According to the Center for Disease Control, there are several important steps you can take to stop the spread of the flu. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If no tissues are immediately available, it is advisable to cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm (where your elbow bends) rather than coughing into your hands. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective if you don't have access to soap and water right away. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread in these passageways to the body.

### One Last Word of Advice

One of the most important actions you can take to prevent the spread of infection is to stay home if you have symptoms or if you are sick. Risking your health by coming to work, you risk compromising the health of others. At work, use social distancing to avoid close contact with co-workers and others who are coughing and sneezing. Keep a safe three feet away from them and follow the general precautions listed above, particularly frequently washing your hands and practicing "Respiratory Etiquette" by covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.

**At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EH&S liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EH&S Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city.**

**CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY.**