1. Guiding Documentation
- Municipal Government Act
- Emergency Management Act 2000
- Alberta Occupation Health & Safety Code
- County of Vermilion River Policy PE 001
- County of Vermilion River Policy PE 008

2. Definitions
2.2 In this Policy:
   b. Alberta Health Services – Implements and provides healthcare services and programs including actions in response to a pandemic.
   c. Health Canada – In regard to pandemics Health Canada is responsible for approval and distribution of vaccines.
   d. PHAC – Public Health Authority of Canada. At a federal level is the agency responsible for coordinating risks to public health.
   e. WHO – World Health Organization. The World Health Organization (WHO) monitors outbreaks of illness on a global scale and coordinates international response.

3. Policy Statement:
3.1 As part of emergency preparedness and planning the County of Vermilion River has established pandemic guidelines herein to provide for continuity of essential services and a safe workplace for employees in order to ensure a safe and viable community.

4. Background:
4.1 Spread of pandemic influenza can be worldwide in scale. Because pandemics are caused by new strains of influenza, vaccines cannot be created until the new strain emerges. A pandemic in Alberta is anticipated to infect 70% of the population with 15-35% of the population...
becoming ill and the remainder being carriers of the virus.\footnote{Alberta’s Plan for Pandemic Influenza (2009). p. 6.} This could cause supply chain disruptions, employee absenteeism and continuity of service challenges including disruption to mutual aid agreements. A pandemic is expected to arrive in 2 or more\footnote{Government of Alberta (2014). Alberta’s Pandemic Influenza Plan p. 12} waves before containment is achieved.

4.2 Pandemic influenza is spread by:

- Direct Contact - Respiratory droplets released when a person coughs, sneezes or talks traveling up to 2 meters in the air before landing.
- Airborne - Smaller infected respiratory droplets may hang in the air and be transmitted through inhalation.
- Contact with Infected Services - Hard or porous surfaces infected with respiratory droplets (doorknobs, desks, clothing, etc.)


- Refer to Alberta Health Services guidelines
- Hard surfaces: 24-48 hours.
- Soft, porous surfaces: 8-12 hours.
- Hands: Up to 5 minutes.
- Infected persons are contagious from 24 hours prior to onset of symptoms and up to 5-7 days after onset of symptoms or longer.
- An influenza pandemic is expected to last 12-18 months arriving in 2 or more waves with up to 12 months between the start of the first wave and start of the second wave.
- Local communities are expected to see the illness last between 6-8 weeks, but this could vary.

5. Information Flow & Authority

5.1 Information Flow:

a. The World Health Organization has the authority to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and will notify the Public Health Agency of Canada if a new illness is detected.

b. The Public Health Agency of Canada will notify provincial health authorities- Alberta Health & Alberta Health Services.

c. Alberta Health will provide information to professional regulatory bodies and coordinate media response in coordination with Alberta Health Services.

d. Alberta Health Services will then notify and share information with health care providers in their jurisdiction to implement pandemic response actions for healthcare at local levels.
5.2 Authority:

a. The lead authorities to a pandemic affecting Alberta will be Alberta Health & Alberta Health Services.

b. The local authority (County of Vermilion River) will act to support local healthcare services as requested.

c. The local authority cannot declare a State of Local Emergency for areas in which a Public Health Emergency has already been declared.

6. Triggers

6.1 Global Triggers:

a. The World Health organization has four (4) levels of pandemic phases to trigger preparation and response actions. The 4 phases are:3

   • Interpandemic Phase - The period between influenza pandemics.
   • Alert Phase - When a new influenza subtype has been identified in humans.
   • Pandemic Phase - The period of global spread of the new influenza subtype.
   • Transition Phase - Reduction of risk and de-escalation of global actions.

6.2 Provincial Triggers4:

a. The following information has been summarized for brevity.

   • Pandemic Virus Detected in Alberta – Increasing health sector capacity, preparation for vaccine distribution, public health communications, implementing of clinical guidelines.
   • Second or Subsequent Waves - Immunization, surveillance for strain changes and resistance.

6.3 Local Authority Triggers:

a. The County of Vermilion River shall remain in a state of readiness for implementation of the pandemic response policy as part of their overall emergency management planning and program.

b. Pandemic Phase. Once the Pandemic Phase or global spread of a new influenza subtype is announced and due to the potential rapid rate of spread the County will begin to implement the following pandemic preparedness activities including:

   • **Review of Service Assessment**- Review of any existing business continuity plans and/or critical, vital and necessary services and capacity to meet each including identification of any services that may be temporarily suspended.

---

- **Work Site Pandemic Hazard Assessments** - Completed to identify high, medium and low exposure jobs.
- **Review Pandemic Hazard Control Options.**
- **Review Current Human Resource Policies and Procedures** - Personnel sick time or leave procedures and communication regarding these with personnel.
- **Prevention Communication With Personnel** - Sharing actions to take to prevent spread of influenza including posted signage and additional sanitation and hygiene supplies made available.

c. **Pandemic Influenza Detected in Alberta.** Once the pandemic has been detected in Alberta, the County shall implement the following actions:
- **Mitigate potential supply chain challenges** - Stockpiling frequently ordered items.
- **Implement pre-determined workplace sanitation requirements.**
- **Review and implement pre-determined and appropriate workplace control mechanisms.**
- **Communicate with local healthcare representatives** - Determine how the County may be able to support response operations which may include the following:
  - Coordinate transportation services to vaccine centres.
  - Coordinate and provide alternate sites or facilities to set-up mass vaccine centres or Influenza Assessment Centres.
  - Distribute approved pandemic information to the public and personnel.
  - Ensure the County is prepared to support personnel and implement control measures to reduce pressure on local healthcare services.

7. **Pandemic Personnel Procedures**

7.1 Employees who wish to go to or wait at a clinic to obtain immunization will be permitted to do so during regular work hours. Employees will be asked to choose a location as close as possible to the County office and to coordinate absenteeism so that departments can continue to provide a basic level of service to the public.

7.2 Employees who are ill due to pandemic influenza shall not report to work and must ensure they are fully recovered before returning to work in order to prevent further spread of illness. An employee who is not ill but who is quarantined or isolated by an order can access any sick or overtime entitlement they have accumulated.

7.3 Current illness leave provisions, procedures and practice will continue to apply (Policy PE 008) however the requirement for a doctor note after three (3) days will be waived during a pandemic. During a pandemic the limitation on family sick days (3) days per family member will be waived.

7.4 The County will strive to be flexible in accommodating requests for time off or arranging alternate or from home working hours for employees who need to be away from work to care for family members who are ill (Policy PE 001 applies). In the event that Family Leave entitlements have been exhausted or the employee is not eligible for Family Leave, the employee may use other entitlements such as their own sick time, banked overtime, earned time off or vacation accrued. At the discretion of the CAO sick time during a pandemic may be extended for those who do not have earned time off or vacation accrual.
7.5 Employees may be re-assigned from current roles to other roles when services are impacted by the pandemic. Supervisors will have the discretion to reassign employees taking into consideration employee’s preferences and abilities whenever possible. No employee will be required to perform a function they cannot perform safely. All professional certifications, regulatory requirements and required memberships in professional bodies will be adhered to when re-assigning employees. Training will be provided in order to safely perform new functions.

7.6 Compensation rates and any hours worked in excess of employees’ regular daily or weekly hours will be accumulated or compensated the same as usual however Flex and Earned Day Off may have to be suspended during this time.

7.7 Employee return to work policy will be as per directed by Alberta Health Services

8. Other Policies & Procedures

8.1 In consultation with County Council, the County administration office may be closed to the public once employee absenteeism in most departments reaches approximately 40%. Customer service will still be provided as possible via phone, drop-off mail and internet.

8.2 The County Administrator or Department Manager may make alternations to service levels, standard practice and timelines as outlined in other existing policies and guidelines as necessary during a pandemic.

9. Workplace & Hazard Assessments

9.1 Employees will strive to continue to provide all normal services possible reverting to critical and essential service if required until the departments have sufficient staff to resume all services in the normal timeframe. Critical or essential services may vary depending on time of year and other variables.

9.2 The following assessments should be conducted by the Managing Director in coordination with a Safety Officer of the County.

a. Service Assessment
   - Staged and varying levels of service may be provided and will be determined based on impact of pandemic.
   - All critical staff positions should have an alternate staff member that has the appropriate training, skills, knowledge and experience available who can temporarily, and safely perform the functions of the job.
   - Ensure that there are no interdependencies in critical staff roles to prevent cascading effect should the required employee(s) be absent. Ensure staff redundancy and capacity in critical roles. Determine and categorize additional County services into the following categories:

   Critical
   - Fire and Emergency Services
   - Water and Sewer Operations
   - Public Works - during winter weather
   - Natural Gas - during winter weather
   - Threat to life. Essential services without which immediate loss of life could result.
   - Services that could not be disrupted for more than 24 hours.
Vital

- Public Works - with exception of winter
- Natural Gas - with exception of winter

Lack of these services could result in secondary disaster. Services that could not be disrupted for more than 48 hours.

Necessary

- Administration including internal and external communications
- Payroll and banking

Necessary for community to continue to function. Services that could not be disrupted for more than 72 hours.

Desired

Services that could be temporarily suspended for two (2) weeks or more.

b. Worksite Pandemic Assessment5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure Level</th>
<th>Worksite/Job Description</th>
<th>Recommended Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Exposure Job</td>
<td>• No contact to influenza infected persons in the workplace.</td>
<td>• Take precautions as recommended by Alberta Health Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>• Jobs performed outdoors with good ventilation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not require close contact with other individuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Exposure Job</td>
<td>• Workers may be exposed to infected persons from time to time in large well-ventilated</td>
<td>• Take precautions as recommended by Alberta Health Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>workspaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Occasional contact with the public in outdoor, well ventilated spaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Job tasks allow for more than two (2) meters distance between individuals personnel may be working with.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Exposure Job</td>
<td>• Workers may have contact with symptomatic infected person(s) in small poorly ventilated</td>
<td>• Perform with recommended protections only in emergency situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>workspaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Requires close contact (two (2) meters or less) with symptomatic or confirmed pandemic case.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Preparedness, Prevention & Workplace Controls

10.1 Preparedness. Below are suggested actions that can be taken prior to the onset of a pandemic in order to increase the County’s redundancy. Each suggestion should be evaluated in its practicality before being implemented.

- Cross training of employees to increase capacity.

• Maintain a roster or turn-over list of seasonal staff/recently retired employees/volunteers who are competent in filling less critical roles and allowing other current and more senior staff to fill critical roles as alternates.
• Regular review of proper hand washing, flu prevention and cough/sneeze etiquette for personnel.
• Provision of adequate sanitation supplies including hand sanitizer, soap, tissues, disinfectant.
• Implement workspace cleanliness requirements.
• Identify biggest risks or vulnerabilities in supply chain/delivery services by department and identify alternate sources.

10.2 Prevention. The following suggestions are those which may be put in place once a new strain of influenza has been identified and spread is likely to Canada.

• Pre-stock frequently utilized supplies, beware of expiry dates, restock supply when available.
• Determine how long physical resources can go without maintenance, parts, supplies before they create a safety/health risk or must be shut down.
• Identify personnel that could work from home and provide the necessary supplies.
• Provide employees with refresher to pandemic guidelines, human resource requirements or changes to procedures resulting from pandemic.
• Encourage personnel to self-identify if they encounter symptoms or suspect exposure to pandemic influenza according to Alberta Health Services directives.

10.3 Workplace Controls. Below are suggestions for workplace control mechanisms in response to a pandemic. Each control should be evaluated before a decision on implementation is made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Controls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enforce handwashing procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enforce cough/sneeze etiquette.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enforce workspace cleanliness requirements/procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase level of janitorial services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Restrict workers displaying pandemic influenza symptoms from reporting to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accommodate work from home arrangements and/or employees to work from alternate locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implement flexible work arrangements including allowing staggered start/end times and/or dates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allow personnel time to access vaccine (if/when it becomes available).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Closure of County Administration Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage other polices and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job Training (ex: cross-training).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Protective Equipment Controls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eye protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surgical masks or approved respirator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To use surgical masks as a protective control measure, they must be combined with other controls.\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Engineering Controls</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ventilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical Barriers (ex: Plexiglas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Combination</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A combination of the above controls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. Other Pandemic Provisions

11.1 A Pandemic could have far-reaching psychosocial impacts on employees. The County will endeavor to ensure that mental health services are in place and easily accessible for all employees.

11.2 The County will encourage employees to use mental health or psychosocial services available during and/or following pandemic as needed.

11.3 A review of the County’s polices, procedures, preparation and response will be completed following a pandemic. Recommendations for changes to policies collected from employee feedback will be identified. Council will consider these recommendations and changes to this policy may be made.

### 12. Appendix

#### 12.1 Staying Healthy at Work:

- Eat at your own desk or away from others (or go home for lunch, avoid crowded restaurants, etc.)
- Consider use of Skype, FaceTime or other video conferencing and telephone conferencing applications (depending on the severity of the pandemic, this can even be an option for staff within the same office building).
- For meetings that must be face-to-face, ensure it is in a large well-ventilated room where everyone can be at least 1-2 metre apart. A better option may be to meet outdoors for maximum ventilation.
- Avoid hand shaking, hugging etc.
- Encourage, clients, members of public, etc. for which you have meetings with to meet or provide info via alternate means (phone, fax, email, video and telephone conferencing).
- In more extreme cases it may be necessary for employees to be scheduled on rotating shifts that avoid face-to-face contact and/or consider the potential of employees to work from home via computer, remote access and consider forwarding phones.
- Drive, walk or ride your bike (rather than carpool).
- Keep office door closed.
- Use stairs instead of elevators.

• Remove all brochures, magazines, books etc. from waiting areas, coffee and break rooms.\textsuperscript{7}
• Cancellation of stand up meetings on Tuesday and Thursdays during pandemic situation
• Remove any unwrapped candy or communal food such as donuts, sugar cubes

Remember: symptoms that you have the flu may not appear immediately. Always follow proper cough and sneeze etiquette whether you think you have the flu or not!

12.2 Hand Washing Techniques Courtesy of Health Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

Hands spread an estimated 80\% of common infectious diseases.\textsuperscript{8} The following info may be provided to employees as a reminder about the importance of hand washing and that there is a technique for it to be most effective.

Proper Hand Washing With Soap:

• Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. In most cases antibacterial soap is not necessary for safe, effective hand hygiene.
• Remove any hand or arm jewelry you may be wearing and wet your hands with warm water. Add regular soap and rub your hands together, ensuring you have lathered all surfaces for at least 15 seconds. How long is 15 seconds? The length of time it takes to sing \textit{Happy Birthday}.
• Wash the front and back of your hands, as well as between your fingers and under your nails.
• Rinse your hands well under warm running water, using a rubbing motion.
• Wipe and dry your hands gently with a paper towel or a clean towel.
• Turn off the tap using the paper towel so that you do not re-contaminate your hands.
• When using a public bathroom, use the same paper towel to open the door when you leave.
• If skin dryness is a problem, use a moisturizing lotion.
• If you have sensitive skin or are in a position where you must wash your hands constantly, you might want to use an alcohol-based hand rub instead.
• Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing or using tissues, before and after eating, before preparing food, after handling raw meat, after petting an animal, and after using the bathroom.
• If you use bar soap, keep it in a self-draining holder that can be cleaned thoroughly before a new bar is added.
• Don't use a standing basin of water to rinse your hands.
• Don't use a common hand towel.

12.3 Proper Technique for Using Alcohol-based Hand Sanitizer:

\textsuperscript{7} Assiniboine Regional Health Authority
\textsuperscript{8} Public Health Agency of Canada
• If your hands are visibly soiled, it is best to use soap and water. If it's not possible to wash with soap and water, use towelettes to remove the soil, then use an alcohol-based hand rub.
• Use hand rubs according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure your hands are dry, as wet hands will dilute the product.
• Use enough product to cover all the surfaces of your hands and fingers.
• Rub your hands together until the product has evaporated. If dry skin is a problem, use a moisturizing lotion.

12.4 Cough/Sneeze Etiquette:
• Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue.
• Dispose of the tissue immediately in a proper garbage receptacle.
• Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 15-20 seconds.
• Use disposable tissues.
• If you do not have a tissue cough into the crook of your elbow or your upper arm. Your sleeve will catch and trap respiratory droplets.
• If you do not have soap and water available to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.