

POLICY NO:	AD 019
POLICY TITLE:	MANAGING DURING A PANDEMIC
DEPARTMENT:	ADMINISTRATION
APPROVAL DATE:	08-11-09 (November 10, 2009)
REVISION DATE:	
REVIEW DATE:	

Policy Statement:

During a Pandemic the County of Vermilion River, similar to all employers in Alberta, will be impacted by shifts in the patterns of employee attendance therefore guidelines need to be established to address any significant increase in absenteeism and the impact on a department's ability to provide all of its normal or even essential services.

Background:

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is recommending that employers plan for a 20% to 25% absentee rate over the course of a pandemic however this rate could be more severe in various locations or situations. Alberta's Chief Medical Officer for Health would and has announced when the province has entered into a Pandemic situation – ie. October 21, 2009 when the H1N1 was announced to be in the second wave.

Guidelines During A Pandemic

1. A pandemic is considered unique and is substantiated by AHS. To continue to provide normal services to the public in the face of a pandemic will provide human resource challenges. The County Administrator or Department Manager may require alterations to service levels, standard practices, and timelines outlined in policies during a pandemic.
2. Policies, Procedures and Bylaws should be created with a provision of flexibility in timelines if staffing levels are such that timelines for tasks can not be met.
3. Staged and varying levels of service may be unavoidable or in order as we consider the impact of the pandemic in our municipality, or as it evolves once it has arrived, and what impact it is having on our employees and on our operations.
4. Employees who wish to go to or wait at a clinic to obtain immunization can do so during regular work hours; employees are asked to choose a location as close as possible to the office and to coordinate this absenteeism so departments have a basic level of service to the public.
5. Employees who are ill due to the pandemic should not be at work and may be putting themselves and others at risk during a pandemic emergency. Employees must ensure they are

fully recovered from illness before they return to work. Current illness leave provisions, procedures and practices will continue to apply (Policy PE 008) however the requirement for a doctor note after three (3) days is waived during a pandemic.

6. An employee who is not ill, but who is quarantined or isolated by an order, can access any sick or overtime entitlements they have accumulated.
7. The employer will 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 case where 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 time accrued.
8. Temporary Re-Assignments:
 - a. Employees may be re-assigned from their current roles to other roles especially when essential services are impacted by the pandemic.
 - b. Supervisors are expected to support essential services therefore they have the discretion to reassign employees but whenever possible departments will consider factors such as the employee's preference and abilities. No employee will be required to perform a function that they cannot perform safely. Training will be provided in order to safely perform new functions and in most cases training will include on-the-job training. All professional certifications, regulatory requirements, and required memberships in professional bodies will be adhered to when re-assigning employees.
9. Compensation rates and any hours worked in excess of their 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.
10. Flexible working arrangements including allowing staggered start/end times and/or dates for employees to facilitate social distancing may be instituted. Remedies may include allowing employees to work from home or from alternate locations to decrease the risk of transmission.
11. The employer will take steps to provide a safe work environment for all employees. Appropriate measures will be taken to protect employees from exposure to contaminated surfaces by increasing janitorial level of service during a pandemic.
12. In order to reduce risk to employees the County administration office may be closed to the public once employee absenteeism, in most departments reaches approximately 40%, and will be done in consultation with the County council. Customer service will still be provided as possible via the phone, drop off mail and the internet.
13. Departments will utilize the County webpage and other media communication to strive to keep the public informed of any temporary changes in levels of service available to them during a pandemic emergency.
14. Employees will strive to continue to provide all normal services possible reverting to "Essential" services temporarily until the departments have sufficient staff to resume all services in the normal timeframe.

15. “Essential” Services are those services provided to the general public that could possibly affect the health of the general public if they were not provided. In view of this definition many things will impact when a service becomes essential such as the time of year.
- a. Water & Sewer Operations are essential any time of the year – ensuring safe water quality and treatment plant operation / repair and replacement of line breaks / lift station operation
 - b. Natural Gas Utility Operations can be essential any time of the year but actual supply of natural gas is especially so during cold weather – other services that are essential are furnace relights, responding to possible Carbon Monoxide situations and line breaks.
 - c. Fire and Emergency Services are essential during specific events any time of the year – as volunteers provide this service and will also be experiencing additional demands from their family and employers this service is expected to have the most challenges should incidents occur
 - d. Administration acts as the communication conduit and hub for all departments, public and employee information which is an essential service in these roles – key financial roles include payroll and banking controls
 - e. Public Works provides an essential Service during the winter storms ensuring people can get to medical aid when required
 - f. Elected Officials will Declare a State of Emergency if deemed necessary
16. If deficiencies in the guidelines of this policy when an actual pandemic occurs then that deficiency can be brought forward in writing once the pandemic is over and for council consideration on allowance for impacts of the deficiency and any changes to this policy.