

**From: Whatcom Unified Emergency Management**

## **Press Release**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CHRISTENSEN ANNOUNCES FIRE DEPARTMENT FLU RESPONSE**

**BELLINGHAM, WA**— The Bellingham Fire Department is preparing to limit the potential spread of Influenza “A” (H1N1) virus during 911 responses. Although there are no confirmed cases of the swine influenza in Whatcom County, Assistant Fire Chief Roger Christensen announced Thursday that the Bellingham Fire Department is ready to implement a proactive response.

Emergency responders often take considerable risk while responding to 911 calls. The BFD plan is designed to reduce risk to responders as well as patients while preserving excellent care standards.

The specific steps that will be observable to the public are:

- ⊕ The 911 answering center will be asking additional questions to determine if a patient or others present during a 911 call have any signs or symptoms of a respiratory disease with a fever.
- ⊕ Personnel responding to 911 emergencies will take the following additional precautions if potential influenza conditions are present:
  1. The number of personnel entering the scene will be kept to the minimum responders needed for the specific response.
  2. Personnel on the scene will ask initial interview questions from several feet away to minimize potential exposure.
  3. If initial questions determine the likelihood of influenza, responders will utilize disposable garments and respiratory protection.

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