

Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Billy Hayes (www.billyhayes.co.uk)

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Date: 9 July 2009

To: All BT Branches

Dear Colleague

SWINE FLU in BT

Health Officials predict that it is likely there will be a rapid rise in the number of cases of Swine Flu in the UK, especially as the virus is more infectious than normal flu. However, the symptoms are usually relatively mild. Most people will feel unwell for a few days before making a full recovery. People with underlying health problems can become very ill.

BT has offered the following guidance:

"Given the size of our workforce it is inevitable that colleagues have caught, and will continue to catch, the virus. However, there is no reason to panic and people who are well should continue to go to work as normal even if someone in their building has fallen ill with swine flu; the risk to colleagues from this type of occupational contact is very low. There are no plans to close or evacuate BT buildings and it is hard to imagine circumstances where the health authorities would recommend such a course of action. Travel within the UK and other countries is not restricted, although we have advised our people to minimise all long distance air travel as experience shows that germs spread particularly easily in this situation."

Full BT Guidance on Swine Flu is on the BT Intranet and can be found here:

<http://homepage.intra.bt.com/home/swineflu>

UNION SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

Both BT and the Unions believe that our USRs have a role to play in the current pandemic. USRs are urged to ensure that staff are fully aware of what guidance BT have made to prepare for this outbreak of pandemic flu including what role they expect individual staff to take. Staff should be given information about pandemic flu and the need for personal hygiene and USRs can help in making people aware of the issues.

Where outbreaks of swine flu occur in the workplace, USRs, in partnership with management, should ensure that all staff know the correct advice on personal hygiene, what the symptoms of swine flu are and should encourage staff with symptoms to go home and seek advice from their GP. Although investigation and control of communicable disease is not a normal role for safety reps our USRs can talk to members and point them in the direction of good guidance and help to get over the message that there is no need to panic and people who are well can continue to come to work as normal even if someone in their building has fallen ill with swine flu.

TUC

The TUC believes that trade unions and employers, working together, can make a significant difference in ensuring that the effects of the pandemic are minimised, that the workforce are educated and informed on transmission issues, and in helping ensure there is no panic. More advice from the TUC can be found here: [TUC Pandemic Flu Guidance](#)

CWU Health and Safety Department

Letter to Branches 527 issued on 22 June 2009 by the CWU Health and Safety Department provides the latest general update on Swine Flu and further LTBs will be issued. There are links in our LTBs to the HPA and advice can be found here: **Health Protection Agency Website**

Helpful advice is also on the North West BT Unions Health and Safety Co-ordinators Committee Web Site and can be found here:

North West BT Unions Health and Safety Co-ordinators Committee Advice on Swine Flu

Yours sincerely,

Dave Joyce

National Health, Safety & Environment Officer



Attachment Updated
Swine Flu QAs 9 July

**COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION
URGENT INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS**