



Homeland
Security

May 1, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the tremendous professionalism, dedication, and courage that you have demonstrated as DHS employees as we work to respond to the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak.

This is an uncertain time for many Americans. DHS employees are on the frontlines of our nation's efforts to manage this crisis and protect the American people. I know many of you are working around the clock to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact, while at the same time fulfilling our mission to protect the nation. I'm grateful for the work you are doing at this critical time.

Your health and safety are top concerns for me and we must work together to take proper safety precautions to reduce transmission of the virus while still performing our jobs. This may mean that some employees need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (masks, respirators, gloves, etc.). Others may need to stay home if they have an illness in their family or if their child's school is closed. It will be up to each of you, working with your supervisor and your health professional, to make the right decision.

I am working with the heads of components across the department and agencies throughout the federal government to ensure the safest possible working environment. In concert with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management, we are currently reviewing policies that apply to DHS employees who encounter the traveling public and those who are entering the U.S. at an international port of entry. Last night, you received interim guidance on the use of Personal Protective Equipment. Because this situation is evolving, we expect to issue updated guidance shortly.

I know that you are concerned about how this virus might affect you, your family, and your ability to work. This is a very fluid situation, and policies may change over the course of this outbreak. I will continue to communicate new information to you as soon as it becomes available.

As always, thank you for your service to the Department and the Nation.

Yours very truly,

Janet Napolitano
Secretary