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## **Area Businesses Prepare for an Avian Influenza Pandemic**

Most of us don't think about businesses when we talk about disease outbreaks or epidemics. However, Toronto's experience during the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) taught their business leaders to consider large-scale infectious disease outbreaks in their planning.

### **What has recent history shown us?**

- SARS cost Toronto over \$1 billion.
- Only 225 Toronto residents were actually diagnosed with SARS.
- It took two years before Toronto experienced economic recovery.
- The Toronto's SARS outbreak only lasted 14 weeks.

### **What might a pandemic future hold for Houston/Harris County?**

- Over 90% of businesses may be affected by an avian influenza pandemic according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Over 1,000,000 Harris County residents may become ill during a pandemic.
- Outbreaks lasting 2-3 months are likely to come in waves during an avian influenza pandemic.

To help local businesses develop or enhance their continuity of operations plan, Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, Houston Department of Health and Human Services and the Greater Houston Partnership are partnering to host the Texas Bird Flu Forum ([www.texasbirdfluforum.com](http://www.texasbirdfluforum.com)). The Forum, which will be held from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. on

September 19, 2006 at the Intercontinental Hotel (2222 West Loop), offers businesses an opportunity to learn about federal, local and economic implications of a pandemic. Examples of business leaders who should attend the Forum are Chief Executive Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Information Officers, Risk Management, Business Continuity Managers, Disaster/Emergency Managers, Small Business Owners, etc.

Ann Beauchesne, Executive Director of the Homeland Security Division of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce will speak on the *Economic Implications of Pandemic Influenza and other Large Scale Public Health Emergencies*. A federal panel consisting of Al Martinez-Fonts Jr., Assistant Secretary for Private Sector – Department of Homeland Security, Lisa Koonin, MN, MPH, Director of Business Partnerships – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and R. James Caverly, Director of Infrastructure Partnerships Division – Department of Homeland Security, will address the *Federal Perspectives on Business Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza*. The workshop will also feature the *Local Public Health Response to Pandemic Influenza: The Impact on Business* presented by local public health authorities Herminia Palacio, MD, MPH, (HCPHES) and David Persse, MD (HDHHS).

Preparedness should not be viewed as solely the responsibility of our emergency responders, public health and the health care community. During a pandemic, businesses will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as our economy and society. Successful public health and economic recovery after a pandemic, hurricane, terrorist attack, fire or flood is dependent upon continuity of operations planning done today.

For information on the Texas Bird Flu Forum go to [www.texasbirdfluforum.com](http://www.texasbirdfluforum.com). To register for the Forum contact Tina Cesta, Greater Houston Partnership, at 713-844-3659 or [tcesta@houston.org](mailto:tcesta@houston.org).

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