CAW
Influenza A/ H1N1 Pandemic update.

During the onset of this outbreak across the world, there was a reported case of an H1N1 infected IAM member, and now we have stories being passed around that one of our own members has been diagnosed and possibly laboratory confirmed that they have H1N1. The CAW's position on these issues is that we must respect the privacy and confidentiality of any specific case and therefore cannot comment specifically on it. Though with any such case we would expect the individual not to report to work until they had an all clear from their physician. We would also be approaching the employer to ask if there is any indication that the infection was attributed to any aspect of working at the airport.

Latest update from World Health Organization is that laboratory confirmed cases in Canada have reached 2978. The number of possibly infected people who had H1N1 would be higher because not all flu cases are being laboratory tested. Therefore, there are strong possibilities that this number is much higher. We must keep in mind that in a typical seasonal flu period, thousands of Canadians get sick and in fact the flu regularly kills an average of 4,000 Canadians every year. Therefore, we must continue to be diligent in keeping an eye on this specific strain.

For any member who has not been explained the difference between an epidemic and a pandemic we have a detailed explanation following. Epidemics and pandemics refer to the spread of infectious diseases among a population. The difference between an epidemic and a pandemic is two-fold. First a pandemic is normally used to indicate a far higher number of people affected than an epidemic, and a pandemic refers to a much larger region affected. In the most extreme case, the global population is affected by a pandemic.

An epidemic is defined by an illness or health-related issue that is showing up in *more cases than would be normally expected*. However, in the case of a pandemic, *even more* of the population is affected than in an epidemic.

Let's take a hypothetical example and assume several people contract the same flu-like symptoms in a particular area. Let's further assume that cases show up across the province, but the concentration remains localized in a few original cities. Some cases even turn up elsewhere in the nation, but the illness doesn't catch on elsewhere. In the hubs where it is seen the infection rate remains *more than you would expect to normally see*. This is a classic example of an epidemic.

Now let's take that same scenario but imagine the rate of infection started growing exponentially so that more and more cases were cropping up locally. When the rate of infection grows very fast it is likely, given favorable circumstances, that the epidemic grows into something more. Now we start seeing cases across the nation and the rate of infection is exceeding even that of an epidemic. It turns out in our hypothetical scenario that *most* of the population in the nation becomes affected by this flu. This is a pandemic.

Based on the actual number presented to us by the WHO, it doesn't seem to equate to a definition of a Pandemic, and some critics of the WHO have pointed this out. But putting this aside, on June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6 in response to the ongoing global spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. A Phase 6 designation indicates that a global pandemic is underway.

More than 70 countries are now reporting cases of human infection with novel H1N1 flu. This number has been increasing over the past few weeks, but many of the cases reportedly had links to travel or were localized outbreaks without community spread. The WHO designation of a pandemic alert Phase 6 reflects the fact that there are now ongoing community level outbreaks in multiple parts of world.

WHO's decision to raise the pandemic alert level to Phase 6 is a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY.

1. Stay informed.
2. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
3. Take everyday actions to stay healthy. Such as cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If no tissue available cough or sneeze into the clothing of your forearm as a last resort.
4. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
6. Stay home if you get sick.

How to wash your hands

1 Wet your hands

2 Apply solution and scrub for at least 15 seconds

3 Scrub back of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails

4 Rinse your hands

5 Turn off water lever using your elbows

6 Dry with paper towel