



## Important: H1N1 Virus Update

### SEIU Calling on State and Local Health Departments to Adopt Preventive Measures

**SEIU nurses are backing the first and only comprehensive scientific review control** that offers guidelines to protect healthcare workers with a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1 (Swine Flu).

An Institute of Medicine (IOM) panel, which included a broad based group of experts in occupational health and infection, has concluded that **the lowest level of protection for healthcare workers, when caring for a patient with a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1 (Swine Flu), is a fitted NIOSH certified respirator** (NIOSH N95 respirator pictured on right).



#### Panel Conclusions:

- **Surgical masks are incapable** of forming a face seal between the mask and the users face, thus providing a poor barrier from the inhalation of airborne flu particles.
- **Many state and local health departments have ignored this advice** and recommended inferior surgical masks or no respiratory protections at all.
- **It is critical that healthcare employers purchase and stockpile sufficient quantities of NIOSH approved respirators** so that healthcare workers can be assured of protection as the fall flu season approaches.

Nationally, **SEIU is calling on OSHA to use its authority to ensure employers establish comprehensive respiratory protection programs to protect healthcare workers from H1N1.**

#### Other facts on H1N1:

- ✓ **H1N1 appears to pose a particular risk to working-age people** as more than 95 percent of hospitalized cases are of individuals under the age of 65—the exact opposite pattern for those hospitalized for seasonable flu.
- ✓ **There is no vaccine yet** and workers who eventually get vaccinated are not expected to have full immunity until at least Thanksgiving.
- ✓ **For everyone the best protection** is regular hand washing and use of foam or liquid hand cleaners containing alcohol often.

#### **Locally, your involvement can make a difference.**

If you don't know already, please investigate what protections your facility is taking against the H1N1 virus.

**Please inform us if your facility is not using the N95 masks for suspected H1N1.** Also inform us if your employer is making the H1N1 vaccine mandatory or making employees wear a surgical mask. Finally, please make sure your facility does proper fit testing of the N95 mask/respirator; otherwise use may not be effective.