



Lower Providence Township

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LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP – With officials predicting that the Avian flu could reach the United States later this year, Lower Providence Township is taking the threat of an outbreak and its responsibility should one occur very seriously. A task force, which received the backing of the Board of Supervisors at its March 16 meeting, is working to formulate a response plan.

“It is our responsibility to keep the residents informed and ensure that essential services provided by the township continue,” said Emergency Management Coordinator Charles A. DeFrancesco, who is serving as chairman of the task force. “We also are working with our business community to help employers put a continuity plan in place.”

Informational materials will be mailed to residents and businesses. The township’s website and Community Cable Access Channel will allow officials to provide important updates and instructions, if necessary.

As the events of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina have demonstrated, education, preparation and advance planning are essential when dealing with potential threats, said DeFrancesco. While there is no way to predict what will happen, there are steps the township, residents and businesses can take now to prepare for an outbreak.

The township will be providing residents with information about the bird flu and what actions they can take to help lessen the impact should a pandemic outbreak occur. Additionally, township officials will be meeting with members of the business community to assist them with formulating a continuity plan. In the event of an outbreak, businesses will play a vital role in protecting workers’ health and limiting the impact to the economy.

Avian flu, a virus that occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious and deadly among birds. It does not usually infect people, but infections with these viruses have occurred in humans. Most of these cases have resulted from people having direct or close contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces. In the current outbreaks in Asia and Europe, more than half of those infected with the virus have died.



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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the spread of the virus from person to person has been limited and has not continued beyond one person. Nonetheless, because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that the bird flu will mutate into a flu that is both contagious and deadly to people and could quickly spread easily from one person to another. If the virus were to gain the capacity to spread easily from person to person, an influenza pandemic, a worldwide outbreak of disease, could begin.

“Any community that fails to prepare – with the expectation that the federal government can offer lifeline – will be tragically wrong,” said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt in a press release dated March 20.