



Greater Kalamazoo Area Chapter  
*Serving the people of Allegan, Cass, Kalamazoo  
and St. Joseph Counties*  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

### **Red Cross Urges Preparedness**

**KALAMAZOO, MI, - April 30, 2009** – With the pandemic influenza alert level now at 5, the American Red Cross is monitoring the developing situation with the H1N1 (Swine) flu outbreak and is in close contact with federal and state officials, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security. The Greater Kalamazoo Area Chapter is also in touch with the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department.

Whether the situation reaches pandemic status or not, it reminds us that pandemic flu is a reality and we must be prepared. The status of this situation can change quickly so families, businesses and organizations need to follow good public health practices and review and update their preparedness plans.

Stocking extra food, water and supplies at home will reduce the need to go out should this swine flu strain become more widespread and schools or businesses temporarily close.

The Red Cross recommends storing a two-week supply of food, water and household necessities such as laundry detergent and toilet paper. A gallon of water per person per day should be stored in clean plastic containers. Family preparation steps should also include storing formula for infants, food for special nutritional needs, essential medicines and medical items, and extra food for pets.

Common sense basic public health practices should be followed. These include covering your cough/sneeze with a tissue, frequent hand-washing, visiting a doctor for flu-like symptoms and staying home when sick.

People seeking the latest information are urged to visit the website of the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department at [www.kalcounty.com/hcs](http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs) or to call the HCS Hotline at (269) 373-5300. For further information you may visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) where you can find a short video which is designed to help individuals understand:

- What to expect during a flu pandemic
- The similarities and differences between seasonal flu and pandemic flu
- How the influenza virus spreads
- Steps to help prevent the spread of seasonal and pandemic flu
- How to prepare for a flu pandemic

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also offers information at their website [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu) or 1-800-CDC-INFO.

#### **About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and counsels victims of disasters; provides nearly half of the nation's blood supply; teaches lifesaving skills; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization – not a government agency- and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its humanitarian mission. For more information on the Greater Kalamazoo Area Chapter of the American Red Cross, please visit [www.greaterkzooredcross.org](http://www.greaterkzooredcross.org)*

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