Obama declares H1N1 influenza national emergency

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, American Forces Press Service

President Barack Obama signed a national emergency declaration on H1N1 influenza Oct. 24 to accommodate American health care facilities' ability to address the pandemic.

"By rapidly identifying the virus, implementing public heath measures, providing guidance for health professionals and the general public, and developing an effective vaccine, we have take proactive steps to reduce the impact of the pandemic and protect the health of our citizens," the president said in his proclamation.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has twice declared a public health emergency due to the H1N1 strain. The first came July 24, and the most recent was Oct. 1.

"As a nation, we have prepared at all levels of government, and as individuals and communities, taking unprecedented steps to counter the emerging pandemic," Obama said. "Nevertheless, the 2009 H1N1 pandemic continues to evolve. In recognition of the continuing progression of the pandemic, and in further preparation as a nation, we are taking additional steps to facilitate our response."

The declaration grants authority to HHS to waive legal requirements and gives medical facilities the ability to set up alternate care sites, modify patient triage protocols, alter patient transfer procedures and other actions to employ disaster operations and relief, Pentagon spokeswoman Rene White said.

President Barack Obama delivers remarks to more than 3,500 Sailors and Marines during a visit to Naval Air Station Jacksonville. Obama signed a national emergency declaraton on H1N1 influenza to accommodate health care facilities' ability to address the pandemic in order to protect uniformed personnel.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Leah Stiles

"The H1N1 [pandemic] is moving rapidly," White said. "By the time regions or health care systems recognize they are becoming overburdened, they need to implement disaster plans quickly. Adding a potential delay while waiting for a national emergency declaration is not in the best interest of the public, particularly if this step can be done proactively, as we are doing here."

The most recent examples of a U.S. president granting the Section 1135 waivers was in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Hurricanes Ike and Gustav in 2008, the North Dakota flooding in March and as a protocol for January's presidential inauguration.

Although thousands of U.S. service members were called to duty in these events, the Defense Department does not anticipate a major call up of forces due to the H1N1 , White said. However, the department is prepared to respond if needed.

"At this time, the Defense Department is evaluating the impacts the president's declaration has on [Defense Department] H1N1 operations," she said. "One of our first priorities right now continues to be vaccine availability and distribution – first protecting uniformed personnel, deployed [personnel], training sites, ships afloat and submarines, as well as our health care personnel."

Notice to escorts of off base guests on board CFAY

By CFAY Security Office

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka base security must know the nationality of all off base visitors in order to issue gate passes to them. CFAY instruction CFAYINST 5530.6 designates what identification your off base guests must present to the Industrial Security Office (ISO) in order for you to escort your guests on base.

For you to escort your Japanese guests on base, they must provide proper identification to include one of the following:

- Passport
- Basic Resident Registration Card with picture
- Driver's license (old type)

For you to escort your non-Japanese guests on base, they must provide proper identification to include one of the following:

- Passport
- Alien Registration Card

Be advised, since 2007, Japanese driver's licenses have been modified due to privacy concerns. The new Japanese driver's license does not indicate nationality. Again, security must know the nationality of all off base visitors in order to issue a gate pass.

Therefore, the new type of Japanese driver's license is not accepted as proper identification for your guests unless they provide address certificates, passports, basic resident registration cards with picture or official documents which indicate nationality beside driver's license.

If your guests provide passwords with two four-digit numbers which have been pre-registered at the Japanese License Office, ISO is now capable of reading the permanent address and nationality of your guests using a driver's license reader.

If your guests do not present proper identification to obtain a gate pass from ISO, your guests will not be allowed to enter the base.

Holiday safety campaign launched

By April Phillips, Naval Safety Center Public Affairs

With the holiday season fast approaching, the Naval Safety Center has launched a comprehensive Web-based campaign designed to give Sailors and their families all the resources they need to manage risk through the end of 2009 and into the early months of 2010.

"Many of us are excited about spending time with family and friends during the holidays, but it's important to take a few minutes to plan your activities," said Commander Naval Safety Center Rear Adm. Arthur J. Johnson. "The Naval Safety Center's Web site is one-stop shopping for fall and winter risk management. I encourage everyone to use all available resources to ensure a safe and happy holiday season."

The fall and winter safety campaign includes presentations that can be downloaded and personalized for command safety standdowns. There are also plenty videos and articles for newsletters in addition to links to other resources.

For the first time, the fall and winter safety campaign includes information on suicide prevention and awareness. Although suicide has traditionally been viewed as a medical issue, Johnson said safety professionals have a role to play in helping end these tragedies.

"While many of us are excited about the upcoming holidays, it's important to look out for others who might be stressed or feel hopeless," said Johnson. "The Naval Safety Center is committed to the DON (Department of the Navy) suicide prevention efforts, and our holiday campaign includes links to resources that provide information for anyone who thinks a shipmate might be contemplating hurting him or herself."

The campaign can be found at the Naval Safety Center Web site http://safetycenter.navy.mil/seasonal/Fall-Winter09/index.asp.