

From: IAED

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Academy Statement on WHO raising Pandemic Phase to 6

The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised their alert to Phase 6 – this is their highest level and is called the “pandemic phase”:

Phase 6, the pandemic phase, is characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in **Phase 5**. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way.

The meaning of this change to EMS and Dispatch in most places throughout the world, at this point, is no different than before and, in some areas, even less worrisome than we experienced in late April and early May when spread began to occur from initial cases reported in Mexico into the US. This border-crossing fact constituted WHO Phase 5:

Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

The Academy wishes to reiterate that local and regional conditions drive agency policy and determine when to initiate the use of the Severe Respiratory Infection (Swine-Flu) Symptoms (SRI) checklist and/or the subsequent use of Protocol 36 – Pandemic Flu.

To clarify further, SRI can be used at anytime at the discretion of the local user, and is used for determining if any given patient might be infected for crew notification purposes. It is also used by agencies that have a FirstWatch™ surveillance software program to search for trends and patterns of patient signs and symptoms.

Protocol 36 – Pandemic Flu is only used when an agency or area is actually under response and capacity pressures and needs to begin the triage of patients (i.e., reduce responses). Currently, no agency is experiencing such a need anywhere that we are aware of.

WHO also defines a **post-peak period**, during which “the pandemic disease levels in most countries with adequate surveillance will have dropped below peak observed levels. The post-peak period signifies that pandemic activity appears to be decreasing; however, it is uncertain if additional waves will occur and countries will need to be prepared for a second wave.”



The NAED's CBRN Standards Committee is currently considering if they want to make any further statements about the WHO's move to Phase 6. Please check the Academy website routinely for updates.

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