

For Immediate Release

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ISEA Urges HHS To Obtain Needed PPE for Defense Against Pandemic Influenza

ARLINGTON, VA (July 23, 2009) – Protective equipment for defense against pandemic influenza will not be available in sufficient amounts unless the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) takes action to prepare right now.

Today, the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) urged the HHS to replenish and supplement personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protection devices that are part of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). These products help to keep nurses, first responders and others safe from those with confirmed or likely illnesses, such as H1N1 swine flu. ISEA also called on HHS to urge businesses and public entities to evaluate their PPE needs for the looming flu season.

In a 2007 study, HHS's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) estimated 5.3 billion N95 respirators would be needed in an influenza pandemic, yet there were only about 80 million available in the SNS as of June 2009. The same study estimates that 25-30% of the respirators that are regularly imported would not be available, as certain countries are likely to halt all exports during a period of pandemic influenza.

"Other nations have already taken steps to safeguard responders and healthcare workers," said Daniel K. Shipp, President of ISEA, "France has a population 1/5 the size of the United States, but has purchased 685 million respirators for its first responders, and the government of Ontario purchased 55 million N95 respirators for its nurses."

As flu season approaches, ISEA believes it is vital that the Administration takes the necessary steps to protect the population. PPE, such as gloves, medical gowns and respiratory protection must be stockpiled by the public and private sectors.

ISEA's letter to HHS can be found at <http://safetyequipment.org/HHSletter20090723.pdf>.

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ISEA is the trade association for safety and personal protective equipment. Established in 1933, ISEA supports its 80 member companies in manufacturing and supplying the highest-quality products to protect the safety and health of people who may be exposed to hazardous and potentially harmful environments while working on the job or at home.