

# Infectious Disease Planning: Incorporating Pandemic Planning into School Crisis Plans

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# Why Address Pandemic Influenza?

- ◆ Is a unique crisis situation, different than other emergencies
- ◆ Has potential to cause serious social disruption
- ◆ Is part of continuum of emergency management planning



# Seasonal Influenza

- ◆ Serious public health problem
  - 36,000 deaths in the US per year
  - 120,000-200,000 hospitalizations per year
- ◆ Usually poses respiratory symptoms
- ◆ “Flu season” typically lasts from November-March in the US
- ◆ “Flu shots” help protect against circulating influenza viruses predicted for each particular flu season



# What is a Pandemic?

- ◆ New strain of influenza virus
- ◆ Universal susceptibility
- ◆ Affects large portion of the world and population
- ◆ Unpredictable



# Historic Pandemics

- ◆ **1918:** Spanish Flu (~50 million deaths worldwide, 500,000-675,000 in the US)
- ◆ **1957:** Asian Flu (1-2 million deaths worldwide, 70,000 in the US)
- ◆ **1968-69:** Hong Kong Flu (700,000 deaths worldwide, 34,000 in the US)
- ◆ **??** Scientists believe that it is a matter of time before the next pandemic (when, not if)



# Potential Cause of Pandemic: H5N1?

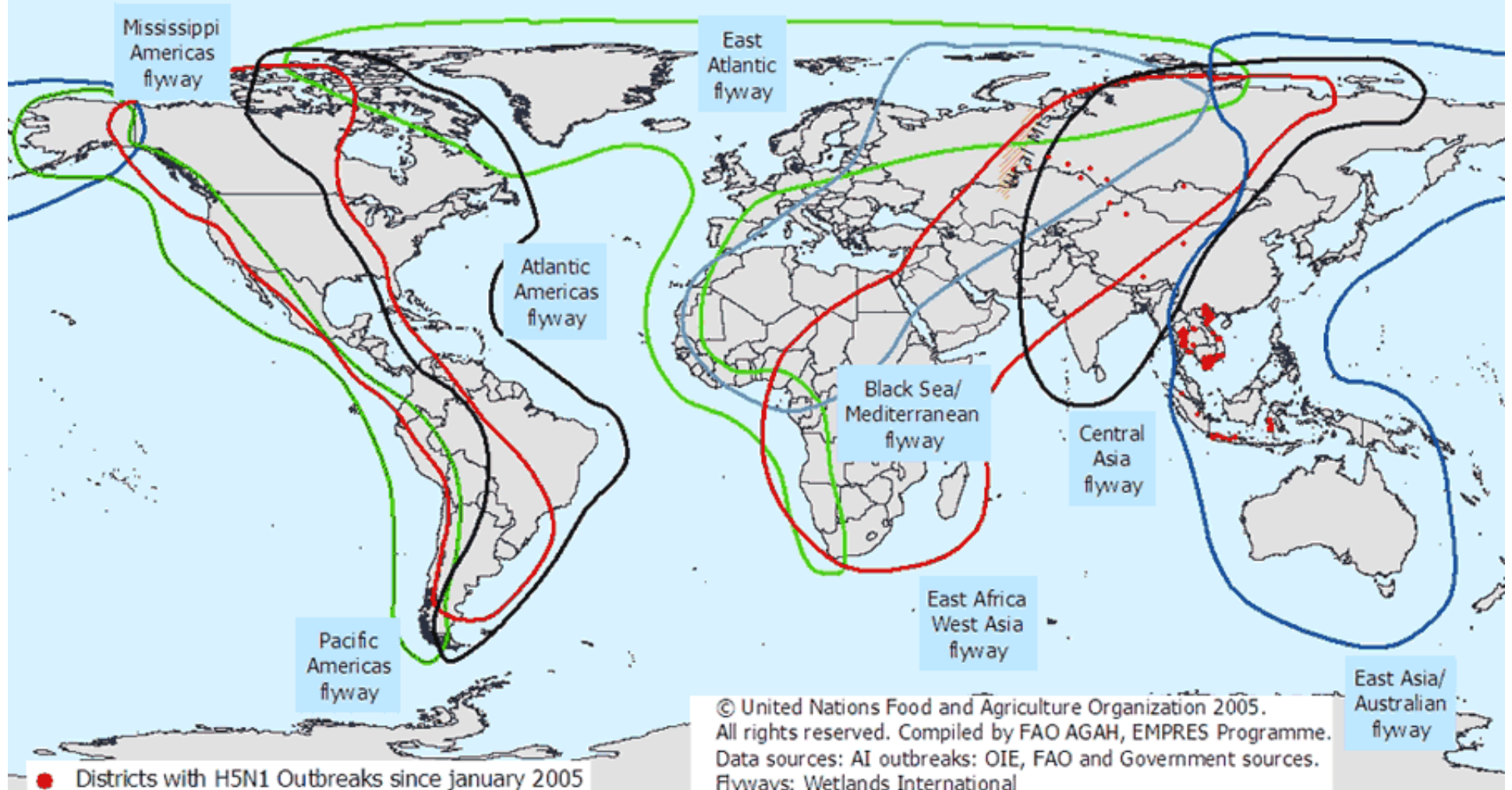
- ◆ Scientists are watching H5N1 carefully
  - Spreads quickly in bird population
  - Has existed in current form for many years
  - Has high fatality rate (about 50%) and ability to cause serious disease in humans
  - Strain is similar (and maybe identical) to the virus that caused the 1918 pandemic
  - Has the potential to shift in a way that makes it easier to spread between people



# Potential Source of Spread

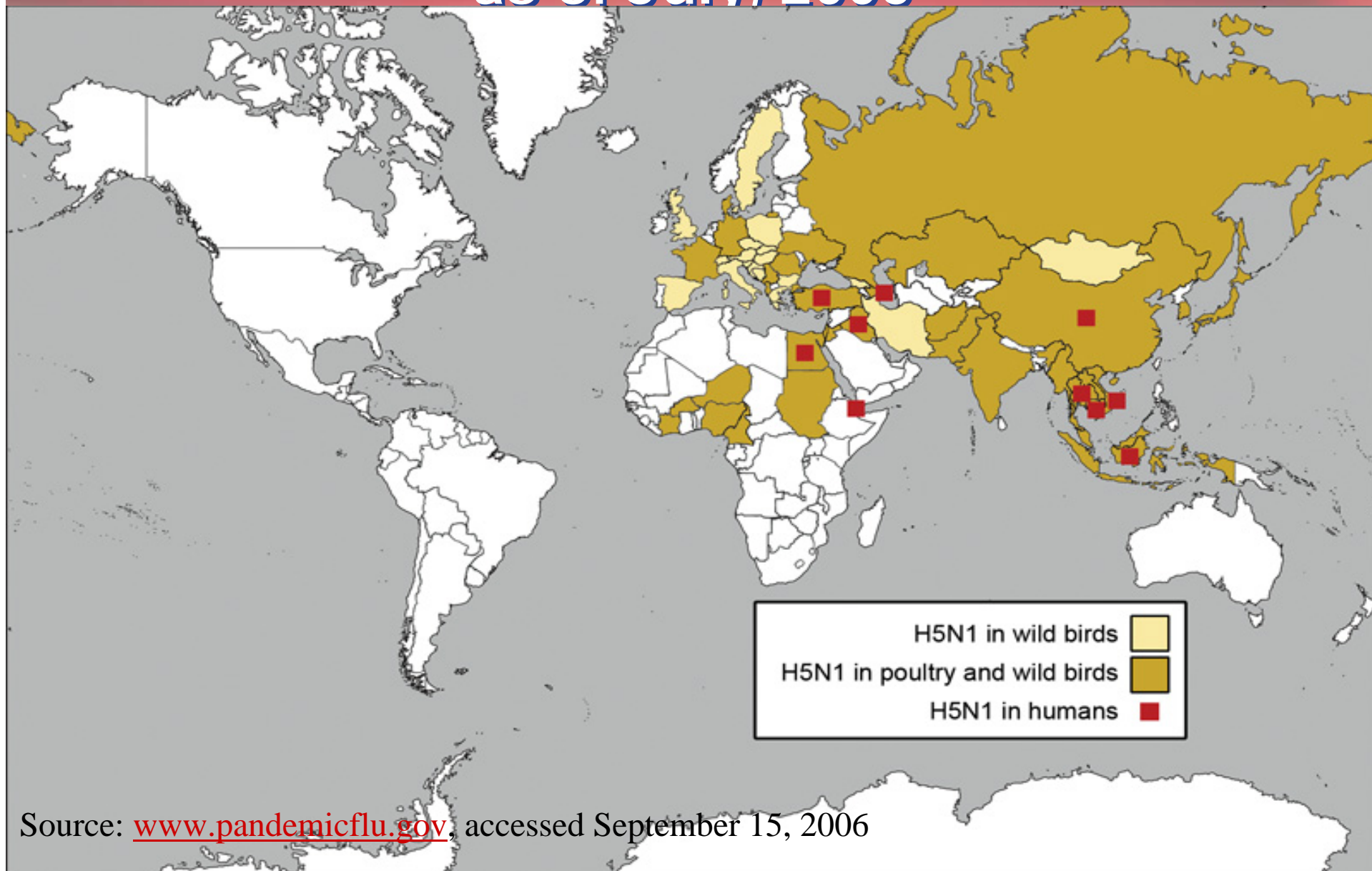
## H5N1 outbreaks in 2005 and major flyways of migratory birds

Situation on 30 August 2005





# Confirmed Cases of H5N1 as of July, 2006





## However...

- ◆ There is no sustained human-to-human transmission
- ◆ Those who have gotten sick have had direct contact with infected birds
- ◆ H5N1 is a concern but may or may not cause the next pandemic

There is no influenza pandemic at this time



# Planning Assumptions

- ◆ Worst case scenario assumed: 1918-like pandemic, little preparation
- ◆ Spread will likely be rapid and unpredictable
- ◆ Each wave of the virus may affect a community for 6-8 weeks at a time
- ◆ Absentee rates may be as high as 40%
  - 20% of adults will be sick (40% of children)
  - Some will stay home as a protective step
  - Others will need to tend to children or sick family members



# Challenges Unique to an Influenza Pandemic

- ◆ Will cause a major social disruption
- ◆ Will affect multiple locations simultaneously so resources will not be able to be shifted geographically
- ◆ Will overwhelm the health care sector
  - Health care facilities
  - Medical staff
- ◆ Will not be enough vaccine or anti-viral medication for the entire population



# Pandemic Challenges, continued

- ◆ May have more advance warning than other emergencies so will need to be careful with communication messages (share vs. scare)



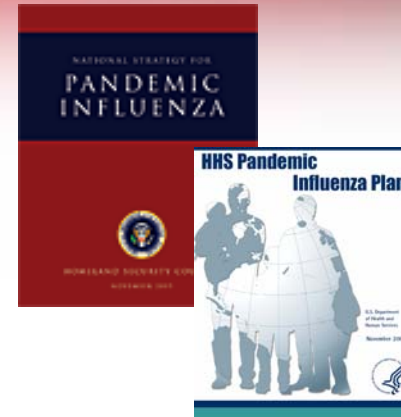
# Implications for Schools

- ◆ Children expected to have high rates of infection
- ◆ Schools may face closures or release of students
- ◆ Policy and logistical challenges
  - School feeding
  - Continuation of learning
  - Need for comprehensive approach
- ◆ Schools may be used as emergency facilities



# Government's Response

- ◆ Federal Government
  - National Strategy (November 2005)
  - Implementation Plan (May 2006)
  - Additional sector-specific guidance (Forthcoming)
  - Department of Education's Pandemic Influenza Plan
  
- ◆ State Governments ([www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov))



# Local Government's Response



- ◆ Local planning efforts will be key
- ◆ Local authorities will have significant responsibility for response
- ◆ Collaboration is paramount



# Schools Can Start Planning Now...Prevention-Mitigation

- ◆ **Identify and talk** to a contact in your local health department
- ◆ **Identify** other key stakeholders, such as school nurses
- ◆ **Identify** legal authorities for school closures and delegations of authority



# Prevention-Mitigation, Continued

- ◆ Review management and other policies and identify gaps
  - Business Continuity Plans
  - Incident Command Structure
  - Succession Plans
  
- ◆ Educate staff, parents, and students
  - Good health and hygiene habits (i.e. flu shots, effective hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc.)
  - Risks of infectious disease and prevention



# Schools Can Start Planning Now...Preparedness

- ◆ Generate and review **communication plans**
  - Consider need for messages to different audiences
  - Identify and trusted spokesperson, such as Public Information Officer
  - Need for clear messages to help assuage fears
- ◆ Evaluate **supply policies** and order supplies if needed (i.e. tissues, soap, alcohol gel, etc.)
- ◆ **Train** teachers and staff on the risks and implications of a pandemic, as well as on contingency plans



# Preparedness, Continued

- ◆ Create a **surveillance** system to help track student and staff absences
- ◆ Consider different mechanisms for delivering **educational content** if schools are closed for extended period of time
- ◆ **Test** your plan and conduct tabletop exercises that include a pandemic influenza situation



# Schools Can Start Planning Now...Response

- ◆ Activate your ICS
- ◆ Communicate with teachers, staff, and parents
  - Messages MUST be clear, accurate, and honest
- ◆ Track absences in collaboration with local health department



# Response, Continued

- ◆ Promote **infection control** measures among and between students and staff
- ◆ Make **necessary changes** through the process



# Schools Can Start Planning Now...Recovery

- ◆ Assess the physical AND mental **health** needs of students and staff
  - Ongoing health assessments and referrals (if necessary)
  - Provide materials on grieving, loss, maybe PTSD
  - Ensure support for staff, such as through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- ◆ Ensure appropriate **environmental remediation** of school facility if school was used as health care site or if there were sick children in school building





# Recovery, Continued

- ◆ Assess ongoing policies and practices, including regular “debriefing”
- ◆ Return to **learning** environment



# Additional Resources

- ◆ Federal government's pandemic influenza website: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- ◆ Department of Homeland Security: [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)
- ◆ World Health Organization: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- ◆ Association of State and Territorial Health Officials: [www.astho.org](http://www.astho.org)



# Frequently Asked Questions

- ◆ Can I still eat chicken?
- ◆ What does “effective hand washing” mean?
- ◆ Should I use antibacterial products?
- ◆ How will I know if I have the virus?
- ◆ What can I do to prepare myself and family?
- ◆ Can and should I buy Tamiflu today?



# Contact Information

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