

Minutes of the Safety Group Fife

Held on Monday 11th February 2008 at

Dunfermline Building Society, Caledonia House, Carnegie Avenue, Dunfermline

Present

Alan Harwood	FMC Technologies
Linda Bell	Business Medical O.H
Ian Norton	North British Distillery
Martin Brown	Arco
William Miller	Strath Safety
Cathy Welsh	Fife Council
Billy McLaughlan	M T C
David Jones	Velux Company Ltd
David Cant	Lauder College
Annette Torley	Fife Council
Tom Heath	Self
Andy Martin	Fife Health & Safety
R Martin	Fife Health & Safety
John Auld	Quaker Oats
Peter Ager	Fife Council
Lynn McCaffray	Healthcare Connections
Mark Russell	Dunfermline Building Society

Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Andy Fowler.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Davy Cant chaired the meeting in Andy Fowlers absence. DC welcomed everyone along to the second meeting of the year, he made reference to the eleventh of February being a momentous day for Fife, the abolition of the bridge tolls over the Forth.

DC introduced Lynn McCaffray from Healthcare Connections who was going to speak about pandemic Influenza Planning.

Lynn started by saying that Healthcare Connections had started life as an Occupational Health Service Provider, it was only when looking at its own emergency planning procedures for handling a Pandemic that it realised that its own procedures were not robust enough to cope if a pandemic hit. They then realised that very few companies had anything in place to manage the process.

Lynn went on to say that the virus could come at anytime, it doesn't have to be a winter flu it could also appear in the summer. If the virus mutates and combines with a normal flu virus all people will be vulnerable, not just the "at risk" category.

She made reference to the Noro Virus that happened in Glasgow over Christmas, it forced the Royal Hospital to close a number of wards and refuse admissions. Lynn mentioned that senior economists are forecasting that a recession will hit if the flu virus does reach pandemic proportions.

The flu virus itself does not just last for 7 – 10 days but could last months, initial estimates that the government are working to are something in the region of 1million of the population being hospitalised and 750,000 related deaths. The Government have been planning their contingency, which will involve the possibility of mass graves.

This year there have been 4 cases of Human to Human transfer of the virus in China and Indonesia, all of which have resulted in death. The World Health Organisation (WHO) pandemic chart currently sits at level 3 (it runs 1-6, with 6 being a full pandemic), once the virus mutates fully and joins with a common flu virus it will escalate quickly through stages 4,5 &6.

The H5N1 virus is very similar to Spanish Flu which killed an estimated 50 million people back in 1918, the fear is that it could mutate into a human form and start another pandemic. Pandemics appear to have a 30-40 year cycle.

In excess of 3million birds have been killed in India and Pakistan to date, both countries are refusing to share evidence and samples with the WHO. To date there have been 359cases of H5N1 recorded, 236 of these have died.

The Government is stockpiling Tamiflu, an antiviral drug. This will not prevent the virus, but it will lessen the symptoms and increase the chance of survival. The Government has only enough of the medication stockpiled to cover 25% of the population. This will be issued on a priority basis to essential workers.

Businesses should expect 50 – 60% Of workers to be affected in some way by the pandemic and anticipate supply chain collapse.

Lynn went on to say that businesses should be educating their staff, this reduces panic. They have to make plans and test them robustly. Good hygiene is essential, telephones, door knobs handles etc must be sanitised.

Key workers may have to be covered, you may have to look at family's, friends and supply chain. PPE may have to be provided, screening and health checks may have to be introduced.

Lynn mentioned that Healthcare Connections had a number of schemes where individuals or companies could gain access to Tamiflu via their prescription service. This would be issued in adequate time should a pandemic threaten.

DC thanked Lynn for her presentation, (copy attached) which had certainly provoked a lively debate.

Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the 14th January 2008 were approved.

Conference Update

MR and AH updated the Group on the progress made with the planning for the conference, MR highlighted that the exhibition space was filling up fast and again MR urged members to get in touch about attending the conference.

The Date of the next meeting is Monday 10th March 2008 at 7.30pm and the speaker for the evening is Nichola McLean who will be discussing the changes to the CDM Regulations. DC thanked everyone for coming along and brought the evening to a close.

Mark Russell
Secretary
Safety Group Fife