

Tulane Forms Flu Task Force

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Responding to the ongoing threat of influenza A (H1N1), formerly called "swine flu," Tulane University officials have organized a Flu Emergency Task Force initiated by Dr. Pierre Buekens, dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and chaired by Dr. Maureen Lichtveld, professor and chair of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences.



Dr. Maureen Lichtveld heads the Tulane Flu Emergency Task Force. She is professor and chair of environmental health sciences in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The task force is a universitywide collaborative organization that includes faculty from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, medical staff from Tulane Medical Center, faculty from Tulane University School of Medicine and representatives from the Office of Emergency Response and University Public Relations.

"We are currently facing what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is calling a public health emergency associated with the influenza A (H1N1)," says

Lichtveld, professor and chair of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

“The School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, as the only school of tropical medicine in our nation, is, according to our principles and our mission, active in making sure that our communities, both internally ? the Tulane community ? and externally ? the broader public ? have accurate information not only about what we are currently facing, but particularly what they can do to protect themselves.”

The task force will serve three key roles, says Lichtveld. “The first is that we will serve as an interpreter of technical information that is available, so that our target audiences, from the general public to colleagues and policy makers externally, will have information that is credible, and at their fingertips,” she says.

Secondly, the task force also will serve as technical experts to best protect Tulane's own community ? its faculty, staff, students and families. Thirdly, the task force will ensure that Tulane is up to date with information on the outbreak and with the facts and events as they are occurring.

“For example,” says Lichtveld, “I am in direct contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and have a direct link to real-time information from an epidemiological perspective, as well as for information that goes out to the general public.”

The task force will work with the [Tulane Office of Emergency Response](#) and, through the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine's Office of Global Health, with all of Tulane's colleagues and affiliates around the globe.

“We are working to make sure that we get information out in a way that is timely, in a way that is easily interpreted, and in a way that helps people protect themselves,” says Lichtveld, who also holds the Freeport McMoran Chair of Environmental Policy at Tulane.