



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PRESS RELEASE

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PUNO URGES LGUs TO MOBILIZE RURAL HEALTH UNITS, BARANGAY TEAMS VS A(H1N1) VIRUS

Secretary Ronnie Puno of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has reminded local chief executives nationwide to mobilize their respective rural health units and activate their barangay emergency response teams as reporting centers for cases of the Influenza A(H1N1) following the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) of the international flu crisis as a pandemic.

Puno reiterated to local officials that they should “take the lead in the conduct of a massive community information campaign to inform the public on the signs and symptoms of infection and measures to prevent the spread of the said A(H1N1) virus.”

“Local chief executives should also take the lead in the implementation of other urgent measures to prevent an AH1N1 outbreak in their communities,” Puno said.

He said local officials should “mobilize the Rural Health Units and activate the Barangay Emergency Response Teams as reporting centers for cases of Influenza A(H1N1), and to manage influenza A(H1N1) suspects and their contacts.”

Puno issued a circular covering such guidelines to provincial governors, mayors, punong barangays and DILG regional directors last June 4, or before the WHO declared the AH1N1 crisis as a pandemic.

Puno had directed all DILG regional directors to immediately disseminate the circular to all local authorities within their respective areas of responsibility.

The DILG chief noted that while the Department of Health had announced that there is no community-level outbreak yet of the dreaded virus, “monitoring and reporting are essential.”

The Geneva-based WHO announced on June 11 that the AH1N1 crisis has escalated into the world’s first flu pandemic in 40 years after infecting tens of thousands of people in 74 countries. As of June 10, the WHO reported 27,737 cases including 141 deaths.

WHO said after an emergency meeting with its experts that the pandemic warning for this new strain of the influenza virus was raised from phase 5 to 6, the highest alert level.

The WHO alert came the same day that the DOH confirmed that for the first time, the dreaded virus had hit a public school in the Philippines and that the number of confirmed cases in the country was nearing the 100 mark.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) earlier postponed the opening of classes at the college level from June 8 to June 15 to prevent the spread of the AH1N1 virus after cases were reported at the De La Salle University in Manila. The College of St. Benilde and Far Eastern University-East Asia College in Manila, Ateneo de Manila High School in Quezon City, and St. Andrews School in Paranaque suspended classes due to confirmed AH1N1 cases among their students.

The last influenza pandemic was the Hong Kong flu of 1968 which killed about one million people. Ordinary flu kills about 250,000 to 500,000 people each year.