

Manufacturers Worried About Absenteeism During Flu Season

New Survey Finds Support for Hand Hygiene Education & Preventive Measures



On the heels of last year's H1N1 scare, manufacturers are taking a closer look at how to avoid wide-spread workplace absenteeism and productivity declines if faced with another flu pandemic.

According to a recent survey conducted by Kimberly-Clark Professional, 87 percent of manufacturing industry professionals polled said they are concerned about declines in productivity at their workplace due to absenteeism or presenteeism related to a flu pandemic.

"Small and large industrial companies alike are challenged to maintain high output even when workers are healthy and productive," says Marianne Santangelo, Senior Customer Marketing Manager, Kimberly-Clark Professional. "This can be difficult when large numbers of workers are out with colds or the flu. The need to keep workers productive is one of the reasons Kimberly-Clark Professional has launched the Healthy Workplace Project, to help employees in a variety of workplaces understand, eliminate and prevent the spread of cold and flu germs."

In fact, 46 percent of those polled in the survey said that their organization has been impacted in the last 18 months by employee absenteeism or productivity declines related to flu outbreaks or other contagious illnesses.

Preventing the Spread of Illness

While concerned, manufacturing companies appear to be prepared for this year's cold and flu season. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of the industrial workers polled noted that their company or facility has a program or strategy in place to try to limit the transfer of germs in the workplace. The vast majority (97 percent) pointed to hand hygiene education as the primary tactic employed, while about 78 percent said employees are prompted to go home or stay home if sick.

Not leaving it up to chance, almost 43 percent of those polled said that supervisors

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are encouraged to recommend that sick employees go or stay home, while 37 percent said that the decision is left up to the individual employee.

“The message is getting through to companies that simple steps like frequent hand washing and staying home when ill are some of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs in the workplace,” Santangelo adds.

Santangelo points out that close to 90 percent of the industrial workers polled thought that frequent hand washing was one of the most important things to do to prevent the spread of germs at work. Moreover, 82 percent thought it was one of the most important things to do in preventing the spread of germs from the worksite to employees’ homes and families.

The Healthy Workplace Project

Hand washing is a key theme of a new Kimberly-Clark Professional program called the Healthy Workplace Project, a comprehensive approach to hand hygiene aimed at reducing workplace absenteeism and the productivity and business losses that occur when workers are sidelined by colds, the flu and other contagious ailments. It aims to break the germ transmission chain by providing a host of materials to educate and engage employees as well as tools to help employers reduce absenteeism. For more information, visit www.healthyworkplaceproject.com [1].

The survey of 94 manufacturing industry professionals was conducted via the Internet between August 25, 2010 and August 31, 2010. All survey respondents indicated they were responsible for purchasing, selecting, or influencing the purchase or selection of skin care, soap or hand hygiene products for their company or facility.

Located in Roswell, Ga., Kimberly-Clark Professional is one of Kimberly-Clark Corporation’s four business segments and can be visited on the web at www.kcprofessional.com [2].

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[1] <http://www.healthyworkplaceproject.com/>

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