



28th July 2009

Ambulance moves to protect staff against H1N1 flu

Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service of NSW Greg Rochford today signed off on a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to help protect frontline staff from H1N1 influenza.

Mr Rochford said, "Until further instruction is issued it will be mandatory from today for all paramedics, patient transport officers and ambulance volunteers to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when attending patients.

The minimum requirement for staff attending patients will be the wearing of protective goggles and face masks (see pictures attached). The PPE will be worn by staff until any respiratory symptoms are excluded from diagnoses of the patient.

"The age group most affected by this virus has been the 5 to 51 years. This is also the age bracket where the majority of our staff and their family members fit into. This virus continues to cause life threatening illness and death in patients belonging to identified vulnerable groups.

One of the groups identified as vulnerable is pregnant women. As part of the overall protective measures being put in place for staff the Service it is developing a range of alternative work locations for pregnant officers, who are deemed to be at risk by their treating doctor.

"Ambulance and the community must remain vigilant as the peak of this influenza outbreak is not expected to arrive for some weeks to come.

"This new strategy is being put in place as a risk management approach to maximising staff safety and maintaining service delivery to the community during this current influenza outbreak, it will also minimise the risk for patients, other staff and family members of the Service" he said.

