The 2010-2011 flu season officially began three weeks ago on 1 October. Although epidemics of influenza occur every year, the timing, severity, and length of the outbreak depends on many factors, including what flu viruses are spreading and whether they match the viruses in the vaccine. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), during the last flu season (2009-2010) the world experienced the emergence of the H1N1 virus (sometimes called the "swine flu"). This virus caused the first influenza pandemic in more than 40 years.

When attempting to discern the relevance for the Emergency Services Sector (ESS), the Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) ascertained that the CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting emergency personnel against this potentially serious sickness. "While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season."

The EMR-ISAC confirmed there are additional preventive measures first responders can practice to avoid infection, such as good health habits (e.g., quit smoking), frequently washing hands, avoiding sick people when possible, and antiviral medications if prescribed. More Seasonal Flu Information is available to assist ESS organizations in their prevention and protection efforts to maintain operational effectiveness.