



News, Views & Comments from the World of Building Service Contracting

Submit your news for publication to Carol Dean at cdean@wfbsc.org

ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

Swine Flu Appears To Have Peaked

With a month to go in the southern winter flu season, swine flu infections seem to have peaked in Argentina and it appears that the influenza virus, which has spread so widely in the country that there are likely not many left to infect, remains the same strain that circulated in North America. As a result, scientists are predicting that a single vaccine can work around the world and Tamiflu will remain an effective treatment. While Argentina has the most swine flu deaths outside the United States, the virus is less lethal than normal seasonal flu although it is affecting the young, healthy population more than other age groups.

AUSTRALIA-MELBOURNE

Clean Start Agreements Lead To Cost Hikes

An independent hearing by Fair Work Australia led to the Fair Work Commissioner requiring Clean Start contractors in Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide to comply with the 2008 LHMU Clean Start Union Collective Agreement, which a majority of cleaning contractors in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory signed last year. Clean Start is the first ever national Union Collective Agreement in the contract cleaning industry. As a result,

costs in relation to employment in the central business districts of Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide are set to increase. The government has indicated it is going to favor awarding contracts to those contractors that have signed Clean Start Agreements.

BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

New Site Offers Online Pandemic Guidance

The European Union Centers for Disease Control (ECDC) is now available online. The site offers improved accessibility to websites recently incorporated or created by ECDC (e.g. EPIET, ESCAIDE, Disease Specific Networks websites), the opportunity to benefit from a contextual navigation, as well as other features, such as social bookmarking and a dynamic A-Z index, are among the major improvements. Keep abreast of breaking H1N1 news by going to www.ecdc.europa.eu.

BRAZIL-BRASILIA

Brazil Now Has Third Highest Deaths

The Health Ministry claims that the death toll from H1N1 has risen to 200, making Brazil the country with the third largest number of fatalities from the virus, after the United States and Argentina. The figure still needs to be confirmed by the World Health Organization. The Ministry has

reported that the majority of victims were from Southern Brazil with 40 percent of the victims from Sao Paulo state; 23 percent from Rio Grande do Sul state, which borders on Argentina and Uruguay, and 22 percent from Parana, which borders on Argentina and Paraguay.

CANADA-OTTAWA

Commercial Market Down Sharply

According to a report from CB Richard Ellis (CBRE), the commercial real estate market is down significantly and most likely will not recover as quickly as the residential sector, which has reported a sixth straight month of increases. The report noted the number of commercial transactions completed in the first six months of 2009 was down 38% from the same period in 2008 and the value of the transactions shrank by 51% over the same period prior year. Many economists point to the tight credit market and shunning of mortgage-backed securities as a factor. Suburban office, hotel and industrial properties are among the most affected. Toronto had the highest number of transactions although it was down over 35% in value and over 42% in volume from 2008. Calgary had a large decline with sales worth \$471 million in the first half of 2009 compared with \$2.2 billion in the same period of 2008.

FRANCE-AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Beware The Hissing/Exploding iPhone

A French teenager received a tiny shard of glass in his eye after an iPhone literally exploded in front of him. The teen said that the iPhone began making a hissing sound before the screen suddenly shattered, which shot pieces of glass into the air. The teen was not seriously injured. There have been several reports of problems with the iPhone hardware. In July, a 29-year-old salesman in Marseille said his screen suddenly broke-up while he was in the middle of a phone call although he was not hit by debris. A similar incident happened in Britain, where a father from Liverpool threw his daughter's iPod Touch into the back yard only seconds before it exploded. He also reported a hissing noise before the device failed. Apple has not commented on the problem.

GERMANY-BERLIN

Deutsche Post Closing 500 Post Offices

In an effort to save money, Deutsche Post, the privatized mail service in Germany, will close 500 of its 14,000 locations in Germany that it operates alone. Branches operated jointly with Postbank will continue to stay open. According to Deutsche Post, most of the post offices facing closure have just one or two windows for customers and the company promised that every town or village with at least 2,000 residents would have a manned post office. The closures will be complete by the end of 2011.

JAPAN-TOKYO

66% Believe Recovery Is Near

A survey of 108 major companies shows that a majority believe the economy will recover by the first half of 2010 an improvement over the last survey which showed 98 percent believing the economy was deteriorating. In the survey of top managers 12 said the economy is already recovering, 15 expect to see a recovery by the latter half of 2009 and 44 by the first half of 2010. Of the managers surveyed 51 firms cited they wanted the government to engage in stronger pump-priming measures, 45 wanted reforms to medical services and pension systems, and 34 wanted drastic reforms to tax systems. On the employment front, 65 companies reported their current workforces are appropriate while 36 others said they still have surplus workforces. 45 firms said they have dismissed regular and non-regular employees since fiscal 2008 and 56 firms, or 52 percent of the total, said they plan to reduce the number of recruits from this spring.

NEW ZEALAND-AUCKLAND

Rate Of Spread High In New Zealand

Research posted in the New Zealand Medical Journal shows that one person infected with the H1N1 virus will spread it to two people. Researchers used mathematical modeling to estimate the transmission potential of the new H1N1

strain. They also discovered that the spread may be even higher in New Zealand than it was in Mexico. The reproduction number is 1.96 in New Zealand – translating to up to 79% of people infected – versus 1.4 to 1.6 in Mexico and 2.0 to 2.6 in Japan. The population most infected is in the age range of 10 to 45 years. Further studies are needed to produce more robust reproduction estimates for New Zealand.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Government Encourages Early Detection

In an effort to increase early detection and prevent unnecessary death, the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs is making tests for the H1N1 virus available at private clinics and hospitals. Patients can have DNA samples sent to one of 40 hospitals and confirmation of the virus would be made within three days. In addition, the government is requiring healthcare workers to conduct tests on patients that exhibit symptoms of pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome. The ministry will also subsidize the cost of the tests with up to 50 percent of the price of almost \$100 covered by national health insurance. The Korean government also put into place vaccination plans for the H1N1 virus. It plans to offer the H1N1 vaccine to 13 million people, or 27 percent of the total population by mid-November and the vaccine manufacturer plans to have vaccines for at least 5 million people available until the end of the year.

TAIWAN-TAIPEI

Sales Planned To Repair Infrastructure

In order to raise money and spread reconstruction costs over two-three years to repair bridges, roads and other infrastructure destroyed in the Typhoon Morakot, the government plans to raise about NT\$110 billion (US\$335 million) by releasing some of its shares in national enterprises without losing the government's controlling stake in the state-run companies. The government plans to sell shares in Taiwan Financial Holding Company, Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation and Taiwan Cooperative Bank. It currently owns 100 percent of the enterprises. It may also look at selling shares in companies it does not

own completely such as Mega Financial Holding Company (22 percent owned) and Chunghwa Telecommunications Company (35 percent owned).

THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

All Sectors Experience Drop In Vacancies

The latest figures of Statistics Netherlands show that the number of vacancies dropped by 25,000 over the first quarter of 2009 although the overall figure is not as low as in 2003. The number of vacancies fell in almost all sectors of the Dutch economy. The largest dip was in commercial services, including trade and business services, which had half of the number of vacancies. The number of vacancies in this sector fell by 16,000 while in industry and construction and non-commercial services the number of vacancies fell by 5,000 each. Non-commercial services comprise government, education, health care and social work, and culture.

UK-LONDON

OCS Gives Young People Chance To Shine

International facilities services group OCS has continued its support for Chance to Shine, a scheme now in its fourth year, which recognizes the power of cricket to help young people acquire important skills, values and attitudes for their future life. Surrey Cricket and associated clubs run a cricket project, including some 70 county primary schools, where one school from each project has the opportunity to compete at the OCS Chance to Shine Finals Day at the Brit Oval, London. The Cricket Foundation launched Chance to Shine to bring competitive cricket and its educational benefits to at least a third of the country's state schools over 10 years. OCS is also committed to supporting sport for young people at grass roots level and runs the OCS Young Sports Person Awards with the charity SportsAid. Since the awards began in 1998, OCS has made sports bursaries in excess of £235,000 to over 100 deserving young people and, over the last 30 years, SportsAid has supported in excess of 1,500 able bodied and disabled young sports people each year.

UK-LONDON

Priorities For Vaccination Plan Announced

The government recently announced its vaccination priorities for the swine flu giving first priority to people aged six months to 65 years of age with medical conditions like diabetes, asthma and heart disease. The next priority will be healthcare workers and pregnant women followed by those who live with people with compromised immune systems and those over age 65 who have health conditions. While three hundred thousand doses of the vaccine have been delivered by the manufacturers this month and 54.6 million doses will have arrived by the end of the year, the vaccination program will not take place until mid-Fall. Trials on the vaccines are currently taking place in England and across Europe. The European Medicines Agency is expected to license the drug in late September or early October.

UK-LONDON

H1N1 Could Lead To Litigation For Employers

Employment law experts are warning businesses that if firms are not prepared to deal with issues rising from affected staff during an H1N1 pandemic, they can face a large number of legal claims. Employees hit by swine flu could file claims for personal injury, health and safety, and negligence and the lawyers noted litigation has continued to rise during the recession. Employers need to take steps to mitigate the risk of employees contracting H1N1 at work. As one employment law firm partner noted, if employers don't take some steps to consider what will happen if someone is affected, there are a number of health and safety and duty of care regulations that would come into play.

US-MASSACHUSETTS

Protect Online Promotional Codes

Companies need to be wary of internet promotions and the possibility of losing money over the internet. According to a security researcher a weak password in an online promotion cost one company \$77,000. A hacker guessed the coupon code in a Domino's Pizza promotion and then publicized it. The code was then used 11,000

times in 48 hours. Patrons ordering pizza online would put in their order then enter the code, essentially a password, into the coupon field on the site. The person who guessed the password was never caught. Many businesses authorize their marketing departments to set up such promotions without advice from network security teams and as a result the companies often lack the tools to stop such online exploitation.

US-NEW JERSEY

Manufacturer Fined By EPA

Lonza, Inc, a New Jersey based company, which is the nation's largest manufacturer of hospital disinfectants, was fined over \$550,000 by the EPA for allegedly making misleading claims regarding the efficacy of two products. Saniphor No. 450, was registered as a tuberculocide, but was found ineffective against a bacterium that causes tuberculosis; and 7 Healthcare Disinfectant Neutral Cleaner, which the company claimed killed *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* on the label, did not actually kill the pathogen in EPA tests. In addition, Klear Guard Tub & Tile Foaming Germicidal Cleaner was cited as misbranded for use of a label with missing first aid information. Before any pesticide is sold in the U.S., it must go through EPA's vigorous registration process. EPA also works closely with the manufacturer on the label language to make sure that it is clear and as specific as possible about how the product may be used. It is incumbent upon the manufacturer to ensure that a product functions as stated on the label. The settlement is one of the largest civil penalties assessed under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

UPCOMING EVENTS

18th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors
Auckland, New Zealand

Congress updates will be available at:
BSCNZ PO Box 31-067, Lower Hutt 5040
EMAIL: info@bsc.org.nz
WEBSITE: www.bsc.org.nz

19th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors
Curitiba, Brazil
2012



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