Seasonal Flu vs. Pandemic Flu

There are some key differences between seasonal and pandemic flu.

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Occurs every year during the winter months.	Historically occurs three to four times a century and can take place in any season.
Caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people.	Caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before.
Affects 5-20% of the US population.	Experts predict an infection rate of 25-50% of the population, depending on the severity of the virus strain.
Most people recover in a week or two.	Usually associated with a higher severity of illness and, consequently, a higher risk of death because people will not have immunity to the virus.
Deaths generally confined to “at risk” groups, such as the elderly (adults over the age of 65), the young (children aged 6-23 months, those with existing medical conditions (lung diseases, diabetes, cancer, kidney or heart problems), and people with compromised immune systems.	All age groups may be at risk for infection, not just “at risk” groups. Otherwise fit adults could be at relatively greater risk, based on patterns of previous epidemics. For example, adults under age 35 (a key segment of the U.S. workforce) were disproportionately affected during the 1918 pandemic.
Generally causes modest impact on society (i.e. some school closings, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home, etc).	A severe pandemic could change the patterns of daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home to avoid those who are sick. Also, people may need to stay home to care for others who are ill. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be limited.