

Corporate Safety

EBOLA VIRUS – UPDATE

Bulletin # 5: This is version no. 5 of the bulletin and contains the latest information. The original bulletin was issued on August 1, 2014. Revision bars indicate updated information from the previous version.

October 27, 2014

An Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak has been reported in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea). According to the World Health Organization, there have been 10,141 cases reported to date with 4,922 deaths since March of this year.

The outbreaks of EVD in Senegal and Nigeria were declared over on 17 October and 19 October 2014, respectively.

A separate outbreak has been reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo that is not related to the current outbreak in West Africa.

In Spain the single case tested negative for EVD on 19 October. A second negative was obtained on 21 October. Spain will therefore be declared free of EVD 42 days after the date of the second negative test if no new cases are reported. A total of 83 contacts are being monitored.

There have now been four cases and one death in the United States of America. The most recent case is a medical aid worker who volunteered in Guinea and returned to New York.

Two health care workers who became infected after treating an EVD-positive patient in Texas, have now tested negative for EVD. Of a total of 176 possible contacts linked with these cases, 109 are currently being monitored; 67 have completed 21-day follow-up (including the immediate family of the case death).

In Ohio, 153 crew and passengers who shared a flight with one of the infected HCWs (prior to the patient developing symptoms) are being followed-up, though they are considered low-risk and are not considered to be contacts.

- **What is Ebola virus disease (EVD)?**

Ebola virus disease (also known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever) is a severe, often-fatal disease in humans and nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees) caused by infection with Ebola virus.

- **How is it spread?**

People are mainly exposed to Ebola virus through direct physical contact with body fluids, the most infectious being blood, stool and vomit of an infected person. The virus has also been detected at times in other bodily fluids such as saliva in the later stages of the disease. The virus can also be spread through contact with objects, such as needles or soiled linens that have been contaminated with infected secretions.



- **How contagious is Ebola?**

The likelihood of contracting Ebola is extremely low unless the person has direct contact with the body fluids of a person or animal that is infected and showing symptoms. The incubation period for Ebola is 2 to 21 days. Patients are not contagious during the incubation period.

- **What are the signs and symptoms of EVD?**

Early symptoms include sudden fever, chills, headache, sore throat and muscle pain. This is followed by;

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Weakness
- Stomach pain
- A rash, red eyes, hiccups and bleeding from body openings may be seen in some patient

- **How is it diagnosed?**

Ebola virus infections can be diagnosed definitively in a laboratory through several types of tests.

- **Is there a vaccine available?**

While several vaccines are being tested there are no licensed vaccines for EVD available. There are no treatments other than maintaining blood volumes by administering fluids. There is no antiviral treatment available. The case fatality rate has generally been reported around 50 percent but can be anywhere from 25 to 90 percent dependent on resources available.

- **Do we need to be concerned about Ebola spreading to Canada or other developed countries?**

The likelihood of the disease spreading to Canada is extremely low. Surveillance protocols are in place along with monitoring programs and developed health care systems that would effectively limit the spread of the disease.

In addition, outbound screening is being done in West Africa on any flights departing the four affected countries

- **Does Air Canada have a documented protocol to address potential Ebola risks?**

Yes, this would be categorized under the Medical Emergencies Protocol of Publication 400 – Emergency Response Procedures. Furthermore, guidance as issued by authorities such as the WHO, CDC, IATA, ICAO, Transport Canada and Health Canada would also be implemented.

- **What employees need to do?**

Avoid nonessential travel to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria because of the outbreak of Ebola.

Employees must follow existing procedures in their respective Operating Manuals when dealing with ill travelers and when grooming aircraft in order to comply with health agency requirements and guidelines.

Know the symptoms of Ebola virus disease and see a health care provider if they develop during travel.

- **How long does the virus survive outside the host?**

Ebola on dried surfaces can survive for several hours; however, the virus in body fluids (such as blood) can survive up to several days at room temperature. Our grooming and seat cover change procedures are effective and will remain the same.



- **Should employees be wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)?**

Employees should wear the appropriate PPE when cleaning visibly contaminated surfaces, passenger cabin and lavatories.

- Employees should treat any bodily fluid as infectious
- **Hand hygiene is the single most important control measure**
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after assisting ill travelers or coming in contact with body fluids or surfaces that may be contaminated
- An alcohol based hand cleaner is an alternative to hand washing but will not be effective if hands are visibly soiled.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes with unwashed or gloved hands

- **Are there any special precautions crews should take at layover hotels?**

No, Crews should practice universal precautions at all times.

- **How is Air Canada monitoring passengers that may be connecting onto our flights from the affected countries?**

Air Canada is monitoring the number of passengers with direct connections to our flights. In addition, Air Canada has reviewed the precautions of our Star Alliance partners that carry ongoing traffic to and from the affected areas. Some of these precautions involve thermo-scans of passengers leaving the affected countries prior to the flight, questionnaires and limited access to airports other than to passengers and airline staff.

- **What else is Air Canada doing to stay on top of this situation?**

- Daily review of guidance materials from Transport Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, CDC, WHO, IATA and ICAO.
- Communicating with Star Alliance partners.

- **What else are Health Agencies doing about Ebola?**

- The CDC deploys professionals to West Africa to fight the spread of Ebola.
- The focus of the CDC is to stop the outbreak. This involves contact tracing and evaluation of people who have been in contact with a person infected by Ebola every day for 21 days to see if they display any symptoms. If symptoms appear, they are isolated and another series of contact tracing begins.

Additional information may be found at:

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/disease-maladie/ebola/index-eng.php>



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