

## TALKING POINTS — Ebola

1. There are no cases of individuals contracting Ebola in the U.S.
  - A man in Dallas, Texas, who arrived there on September 20 after leaving Liberia in West Africa the day before, has become the first person diagnosed with Ebola within the United States. He is in strict isolation within a Dallas hospital; and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has assured the public that this procedure will prevent him from infecting anyone else.
  - Staff of the CDC and other public health officials are tracing the patient's contacts within the United States since his arrival from Liberia and will monitor the health of those they identify to determine whether any of them contracted Ebola upon exposure to him.
  - Staff of CDC and other public health officials also plan to trace the patient's movements and contacts while in Liberia in the hope of determining where and how the man was exposed. They do not believe that his fellow airline passengers were at risk of contracting Ebola from exposure to him because pre-flight screening showed that he had no fever or other symptoms before boarding the aircraft.
2. The current Ebola outbreak does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public. It is centered on three countries in West Africa: Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, although there is the potential for further spread to neighboring African countries. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is surging resources by sending 50 more workers to the area to help bring the outbreak under control.
3. The CDC provides the following guidance for air cargo personnel:
  - Packages should not pose a risk. Ebola virus is spread through direct contact with blood or body fluids (such as urine or saliva) from an infected person.
  - Packages visibly soiled with blood or body fluids should not be handled.
  - Cargo handlers should wash their hands often to prevent other infectious diseases.
4. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) also has been monitoring the Ebola virus outbreak and has been in contact with the World Health Organization (WHO). According to information provided by WHO, Ebola does not currently pose a significant risk of transmission by mail.

As always, in the event of a suspicious package, follow suspicious mail procedures.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is Ebola?**

Ebola virus is the cause of a viral hemorrhagic fever disease. Symptoms include: fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite, and abnormal bleeding. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the Ebola virus, though 8-10 days is most common.

### **How is Ebola transmitted?**

Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected symptomatic person or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions.

Health-care procedures and home care of persons who have contracted Ebola, or traditional burial practices which involve the close contact of family members or friends with the bodies of persons who have died from Ebola, are the activities with the highest risk of transmission. (From WHO,

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48485>)

**Can Ebola be transmitted through the air?**

No. Ebola is not a respiratory disease like the flu, so it is not transmitted through the air.

**Can I get Ebola from contaminated food or water?**

No. Ebola is not a food-borne illness. It is not a water-borne illness.

**Can I get Ebola from a person who is infected but doesn't have any symptoms?**

No. Individuals who are not symptomatic are not contagious. In order for the virus to be transmitted, an individual would have to have direct contact with an individual who is experiencing symptoms.

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