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Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) **Interim Guidance for International Travelers from New Jersey** **August 19, 2014**

Many New Jersey (NJ) residents travel internationally for business. These travelers, and their employers, are concerned about their health. This information document describes the current worldwide situation related to Ebola virus disease (EVD) and the precautions that the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) currently recommends to minimize the risk of EVD infection while traveling abroad.

The major travel advisories issued by the CDC that are currently in effect are the following:

- **Level 3 Warning**
 - **Advises that U.S. residents should avoid non-essential travel to these areas**
 - Countries affected:
 - Sierra Leone
 - Liberia
 - Guinea
- **Level 2 Alert**
 - **Advises that U.S. residents should take enhanced precautions to avoid exposure to Ebola while abroad**
 - Countries affected:
 - Nigeria

Background

Ebola virus disease is a severe, often-fatal disease in humans and animals. The virus was first discovered in 1976 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and sporadic outbreaks have occurred in Africa since that time. Although initial cases of EVD are the result of contact with an infected animal, Ebola then subsequently spreads from person to person; health care providers and family members who care for patients with EVD are at particular risk. In March of 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) began working with the Ministries of Health (MOH) in West Africa on what has since become the largest outbreak of EVD in history. A total of four countries in West Africa are currently affected: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. As of August 15, 2014, the WHO, in partnership with the MOH from the affected countries, reports a total of 2,127 suspected and confirmed cases of EVD, with 1,145 deaths. Although the outbreak in West Africa does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other government agencies have joined with the WHO and other international partners to address the outbreak in West Africa. Although there have been no cases

of EVD newly diagnosed or transmitted in the U.S. or NJ, the NJDOH continues to be vigilant for any potential cases of EVD that involve NJ residents.

Ebola is transmitted through unprotected contact with blood or body fluids (e.g., saliva, urine, feces) from a person who is infected and currently symptomatic with EVD. Ebola may also be transmitted through contact with objects (e.g., needles) contaminated with blood or body fluids from a symptomatic person or through contact with, or consumption of, an animal infected with EVD. The virus enters the human body through mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth) or through breaks in the skin.

Ebola is not airborne; it cannot be transmitted from a person who is not symptomatic; and the use of proper infection prevention techniques (e.g. protective gloves, gowns, mask, goggles, face shield) while caring for a person with EVD minimizes the chances of becoming infected. If infected with Ebola, symptoms generally appear within 2-21 days (usually 8-10) after the exposure; symptoms may include the sudden onset of fever (very common), chills, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, sore throat, abdominal pain and/or diarrhea. The likelihood of contracting EVD is very low unless there has been direct contact with the blood or body fluids from a person or an animal which has Ebola or with a contaminated object. Simply traveling to an area where Ebola is present does not mean a person will be exposed to the virus.

The CDC maintains up-to-date web resources which provide information on the current status of the outbreak, prevention steps that can be taken to stay healthy before and during travel and actions that should be taken if a traveler becomes ill at any point. These web resources, along with CDC travel notices, can be found at the following websites:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>

Though the current outbreak of EVD in West Africa poses very low risk to the general public, the NJDOH would like to highlight a few current public health issues that international travelers should be aware of.

What can travelers do to prevent EVD?

Travelers who are going to one of the affected countries in West Africa should observe the following measures to avoid getting sick:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. When wearing gloves, wash the gloves with soap and water before removing them, and then wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick or deceased persons.
- Avoid attending funerals.
- Avoid contact with animals, especially primates.
- Do not eat or touch “bushmeat” (wild animals, including primates, which are sold for consumption as food in local markets).

- If you have close contact with a person or animal suspected of having EVD, you should always use personal protective equipment, including, but not limited to, gloves, an impermeable or fluid-resistant gown, eye protection (e.g., goggles) and a mask or face shield. In addition, be sure to dispose of, or properly sanitize, personal protective equipment properly in order to limit the spread of infection.

Information for Health Care Workers Traveling to Affected Countries

Because spread of EVD has occurred in healthcare settings, healthcare workers traveling to one of the affected countries in West Africa should exercise extreme caution. For more information on the CDC’s recommendations for health care providers and Ebola, refer to the document “Infection Control for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers in the African Setting” at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/vhf-manual.html>.

If you think you may have contracted Ebola while in Africa

If you become ill with fever or other symptoms such as chills, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or rash while in West Africa, visit a health care provider **immediately**. The nearest U.S. Embassy or Consular Office can help you find a health care provider in the area. While traveling to and waiting to see a health care provider, limit your contact with others. Avoid any other travel or contact until you have been evaluated by a health care provider.

For more information on seeking health care while traveling abroad, refer to the following website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/getting-health-care-abroad>

After your return

If you have recently returned from one of the countries affected by this current outbreak and **have not had any contact with EVD-infected people or animals**, you should monitor your health closely for 21 days after departing the region.

For those returning to the U.S. after having had some contact with Ebola-infected people or animals (e.g., healthcare workers who provided humanitarian aid), please refer to the CDC’s guidance for detailed information about monitoring your health and movement:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>

If you develop symptoms of Ebola after returning to the U.S.

If you become ill in the 21 days following your departure from one of the affected areas in West Africa, contact your health care provider **immediately**. Be sure your health care provider is aware of your recent travel to an affected country in West Africa **before you arrive at the office**, so that arrangements can be made, if necessary, to prevent transmission to others in the health care setting. **If you are going to a hospital Emergency Department (ED), call the ED ahead of time**, and be sure you notify hospital staff of your recent travel immediately upon your arrival to the ED. Alternatively, if you call 911 in order to go to the hospital, inform the paramedics of your recent travel when they are evaluating you.

Additional resources

(CDC) General Information Page:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>

(CDC) Frequently Asked Questions & Answers:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/qa.html>

(NJDOH) General information page:

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/vhf/>

(NJDOH) Frequently Asked Questions & Answers:

http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/vhf/documents/ebola_faq.pdf