



**We Care. And We're Getting Prepared.**

**Information about the Ebola virus for City and County of San Francisco employees**

As a City and County of San Francisco employee it's likely you are aware of—and may have some concerns about—the Ebola virus and its potential for transmission in the United States. There are no known or suspected cases of Ebola in San Francisco and, while the vast majority of City employees are not, and will never be at risk for contracting the virus, the City cares about your welfare and wants you to know the facts about this disease.

**Background:**

On August 8, 2014 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the current outbreak of Ebola affecting West Africa a public health emergency of international concern, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently confirmed the first U.S. cases of the disease in Dallas, Texas.

The current outbreak in West Africa is the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the Ebola virus was first discovered in 1976. The most severely affected countries (Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia) have very weak health systems, lacking human and infrastructural resources<sup>1</sup>.

The good news for City employees and all San Franciscans is that, while Ebola is new and requires additional preparedness, dealing with infectious disease is not. San Francisco has a robust and effective public health system and experience responding rapidly to other disease outbreaks and public health threats.

**Answers to your questions about Ebola:**

*What is Ebola?*

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a severe and sometimes fatal illness in humans. Early signs and symptoms of the disease include sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat. The incubation period, or the time interval from infection to onset of symptoms, is from two to 21 days. Patients are not contagious during the incubation period, but become contagious once they begin to show symptoms<sup>2</sup>.

*How is Ebola transmitted?*

Ebola is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes in, for example, the eyes, nose, or mouth) with:

- Blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola
- Objects contaminated with the virus
- Infected animals

Ebola is not spread through the air or by water. There is no evidence that mosquitos or other insects can transmit Ebola virus<sup>3</sup>.

*Should I be worried about contracting Ebola?*

For the vast majority of City employees the answer is no. Being at risk requires direct contact with infected patients or materials, so the potential for transmission to most City workers—or members of the public—is very low.

Healthcare providers and first responders caring for Ebola patients, as well as family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients, are at the highest risk because they may come in contact with the infected blood or body fluids of sick patients. That's why, while the City is committed to the health and safety of all its employees, the Department of Public

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization Media Centre fact sheets: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Workplace Considerations for Ebola Exposure: <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/safetysecurity/articles/pages/u.s.-workplace-considerations-ebola-exposure.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/index.html>

Health (DPH) is working closely with City agencies, the CDC, and other organizations to put enhanced and specific equipment, protocols, and training in place for healthcare workers, first responders, and EMS personnel.

These enhanced measures include:

- Ebola risk assessment protocol for 911 operators
- Standardized personal protective equipment above and beyond that recommended by the CDC
- Drills on how to put on, take off, and dispose of personal protective equipment
- Regular town hall style meetings with employees

What can other employees do to protect themselves?

The most important step you can take is to get a flu shot so you don't exhibit symptoms that might resemble some of the symptoms of Ebola.

What other actions is the City taking in response to this outbreak?

DPH and the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) are working together with other involved agencies to be prepared. To date, DPH has:

- Activated its emergency operations center
- Established regular, ongoing communications with the CDC and the California Department of Public Health
- Disseminated an Ebola health advisory to all medical providers in the City
- Initiated an assessment of the preparedness of all San Francisco hospitals as well as weekly calls with those hospitals
- Initiated the development of San Francisco General Hospital response protocols specific to Ebola
- Initiated the development of protocols for case investigation
- Initiated a communications plan for advising various sectors within the community, including residents, businesses, schools, and community-based organizations
- Held a town hall style conference call with community-based organizations
- Posted an Ebola fact sheet on its website

**More information and resources:**

If you are concerned about your potential for exposure or have questions, please contact 311. If you believe you have been exposed at work you must immediately report the situation to your supervisor.

- SF DPH Ebola information: <http://www.sfdph.org/dph/default.asp>
- CDC Ebola information: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>
- WHO fact sheet: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>