



Notification of arrival of refugees from Ebola-affected areas of West Africa

8/12/2014

Dear State Refugee Health Coordinator:

As most of you are already aware, an outbreak of Ebola is currently taking place in West Africa. The outbreak is centered on four countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria and the potential for further spread to neighboring African countries. To date, no cases have been associated with US-bound refugees.

Refugee arrivals from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria are limited and are not expected to increase. Operations conducted by panel physicians and Consular Affairs offices are continuing in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Nigeria. At this time, Liberia has halted all panel physician operations which mean that refugee arrivals from Liberia will stop once those that have already received their medicals have traveled. For the remainder of August, there are only two refugee arrivals from the countries of concern. These refugees (Congolese) are scheduled to depart Nigeria August 18th and arrive in Kentucky. Advance information on these refugees will be provided to the state. Information will be provided on future arrivals as it becomes available.

CDC is in close communication with the US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) to ensure that the physicians from the International Organization of Migration (IOM), who are responsible for pre-departure "checks" on all refugees departing Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria, are examining for any signs and symptoms of Ebola. Specifically, refugees are being monitored and examined for symptoms of illness and temperatures are taken on all refugees. Any refugee determined to be ill during these checks will not be permitted to travel as scheduled, per routine IOM protocols. In addition to the pre-departure checks being done by IOM, panel physicians performing the overseas medical exam on refugees departing these countries have received clear information about the importance of obtaining a medical history for symptoms of Ebola or contact with blood or body fluids from an Ebola patient or participation in funeral rites of those who might have died of Ebola. They have also been instructed to notify CDC and respective country public health authorities immediately if they identify anybody with symptoms or contact history of Ebola. CDC will be holding a webinar specific to Ebola for panel physicians in the outbreak-affected countries on August 20, 2014.

CDC and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have standard screening protocols in place that allow CBP to monitor arriving travelers for symptoms of illness and report travelers meeting certain criteria to CDC. CDC has provided updates to partners, including CBP and airlines, about signs and symptoms of Ebola, what to look for in travelers, and when to report symptoms and illness in travelers to CDC. When CDC receives a report of an ill traveler on a plane, CDC staff will work with Emergency Medical Service crews to evaluate the passenger on the plane, and when necessary, arrange for transfer of ill travelers to local hospitals for testing and treatment as necessary. CDC will also inform local public health officials.

Ebola is one of numerous viral hemorrhagic fevers, which are severe and often fatal in human and nonhuman primates, such as monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees. Ebola virus is spread primarily through human-to-human transmission, with infection resulting from direct contact (thorough broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs, or other body fluids of infected people, and the indirect contact with environments contaminated with such fluids (such as needles). When infection occurs, symptoms usually begin

abruptly and include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, and lack of appetite. Additional information about the disease, including answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html?s_cid=cdc_homepage_feature_001/ and *Guidelines for Evaluation of US Patients Suspected of Having Ebola Virus Disease* can be found at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00364.asp>.

CDC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has moved to a Level 1 activation. This is the highest level of activation, reserved for the largest-scale responses. Please direct any questions or concerns you might have now or in the future to me and I will work with my colleagues in and out of the EOC to ensure your questions are answered.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Burke'.

Heather Burke

Lead, Domestic Program
Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Branch
Division of Global Migration and Quarantine
Phone: (404) 639.3408; hburke@cdc.gov