Effective Practices for Business Response to Pandemic Flu and Ebola

Todd Niemeier,
Centers for Disease Control
Disclaimer

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Objectives

• Discuss Ebola etiology and transmission

• Describe preparedness recommendations for businesses and business travelers

• Provide resources for implementing preparedness plans
Ebola Outbreak, West Africa

- On August 8, 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the current Ebola outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

- The PHEIC declaration underscores the need for a coordinated international response to contain the spread of Ebola
2014 Ebola Outbreak

- Largest Ebola epidemic in history
- CDC’s response to Ebola is largest international outbreak response in CDC’s history

Ebola Background

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease

- First discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Outbreaks occur sporadically in Africa
- Family of zoonotic RNA viruses
  - Filoviridae

![Map of Ebola virus outbreaks in Africa, 1976-2014](image-url)
Previously called Ebola hemorrhagic fever

5 species of *Ebolavirus*
- *Zaire ebolavirus*
- *Bundibugyo ebolavirus*
- *Reston ebolavirus*
- *Sudan ebolavirus*
- *Tai Forest ebolavirus*

All but *Reston ebolavirus* known to cause disease in humans

Historically, death rates for Ebola range from 50%-90%
Signs and Symptoms

- Signs and symptoms of Ebola
  - Fever
  - Severe headache
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle pain
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Abdominal pain
  - Unexplained hemorrhage

- Incubation period, from exposure to when signs or symptoms appear, is 2 to 21 days, but average is 8 to 10 days
  - A person infected with Ebola virus is not contagious until symptoms appear
Transmission

- Ebola virus is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or unprotected mucous membranes) with:
  - A sick person’s blood or body fluids (urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, semen)
  - Contaminated objects (like needles, syringes)
  - Touching the body of someone who died from Ebola
  - Close contact (within 3 feet or 1 meter for a prolonged period without personal protective equipment) with a person with Ebola who has symptoms
  - Infected fruit bats and primates (apes, monkeys)

- You cannot transmit Ebola without exhibiting symptoms
  - Different from other infections like influenza, measles, HIV

- Ebola is not spread through the air, water, or food
Interim Business Guidance


Target audience: non-healthcare U.S. businesses, employers, and business employees

- Guidance for specific occupational groups that may have higher risks of exposure to Ebola are available:
  - NIOSH ([http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/default.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/default.html))
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ([https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ebola/index.html](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ebola/index.html))
Interim Business Guidance Key Points

- Most people in non-healthcare U.S. business settings are NOT likely to have contact with people with Ebola or have direct contact with infected blood or body fluids
- Businesses should educate employees about how Ebola is spread
- Avoid non-essential travel to countries with widespread Ebola transmission
- Develop plans and policies including provisions for medical care and evacuation
- Know monitoring procedures of public health authorities
  - Build relationships with local and state public health authorities when planning your response
Educating Employees About Ebola

- Inform employees that the current risk of Ebola exposure is very low in the workplace in the U.S.
- Educate employees about how Ebola is spread, what the symptoms are, and how to prevent exposure
- Educate employees to not stigmatize people from West Africa or Africa
  - Fellow employees or people who have traveled to Africa are **NOT** considered an exposure risk unless they traveled to West African countries with widespread transmission
  - Any employee considered at risk will be monitored by public health authorities
  - West Africans in the U.S. who have not traveled to West Africa within the previous 21 days or have not been in contact with someone who has, are not at risk of transmitting Ebola
  - You cannot transmit Ebola without exhibiting symptoms
Guidance for Businesses

- Avoid non-essential travel to countries with widespread Ebola transmission
- Postpone travel to these areas and consider alternative way of doing business (e.g. teleconferences)
What if you can’t avoid travel to countries with Ebola outbreaks?

- Develop plans and examine policies for employees traveling to countries with Ebola outbreaks
- Ensure these include plans for employee medical care and evacuation
  - Information about medical evacuation services can be found on the U.S. Department of State’s Air Ambulance/MedEvac/Medical Escort Providers webpage ([http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html))
  - Some insurance providers are excluding medical evacuation coverage for people with Ebola
  - Check with providers about coverage and coverage limits for evacuation insurance
What if you can’t avoid travel to countries with Ebola outbreaks?

- Review plans and policies for employees returning from countries with widespread Ebola transmission
- Educate supervisors and workers that the risk of getting Ebola in U.S. workplaces from returning employees is very low
- Develop plans in case an employee becomes seriously sick while working overseas
- Know monitoring procedures of public health authorities for returning travelers
    - These can differ from state to state
    - Consider flexible work arrangements for returning travelers
Risk Categories for Monitoring and Movement

Potential Implications for Travelers in West Africa

- Even if employees are not planning to be in contact with people with Ebola (e.g., in healthcare settings), it is still important to consider the potential implications of the Ebola outbreak for their overall safety
  - Employees injured in a motor vehicle crash may be sent to a hospital where Ebola patients are cared for
  - Since healthcare systems are severely strained in countries with Ebola outbreaks, resources may not be available to treat routine or emergency health needs of visiting U.S. residents
Returning Travelers

- Traveling to Ebola-affected countries could affect employees’ ability to return home
  - Ebola symptom screening occurs at the departing country with Ebola outbreak, flight transfers, and upon entry into the U.S.
    - Fever and symptoms check
    - Asked about exposures to Ebola
  - Travelers with certain symptoms will not be allowed to travel on commercial airlines
- In the U.S. travelers will receive a Check and Report Ebola (CARE) kit
  (http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/travelers/care-kit.html)
Recommendations for Business Travelers

- Check CDC Travel Health Notices (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel.
- If you must travel to an area with widespread Ebola transmission, follow the CDC Humanitarian Aid Guidance (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/humanitarian-workers-ebola).
- Find out about health and evacuation insurance coverage.
- Visit a healthcare provider to update your vaccinations and medicines before your trip (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/see-doctor).
Recommendations for Business Travelers

- **Put together a travel health kit**
  - Over-the-counter medications
  - Thermometer
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - Basic first-aid kit

- **Practice healthy behaviors**
  - Wash hands often or use hand sanitizer
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
  - Avoid contact with people who are sick
  - Do not touch objects or surfaces contaminated with blood or body fluid
What if someone becomes sick in the workplace?

- Develop a plan to manage the unlikely scenario that an employee or customer with an Ebola exposure history should become ill in the workplace.
- The vast majority evaluated in the U.S. for a possible Ebola infection have had some other infection or illness (not Ebola).

Ebola exposure history includes having one or more of the following experiences within the last 21 days:

- Had contact with an individual with confirmed Ebola.
What if someone becomes sick in the workplace? (continued)

- Train employees on the following steps:
  - Isolate the employee or customer in the area where they became sick
  - Tell other employees and customers to avoid the person who is sick and the area where he or she became sick
  - Notify the state or local health department and the occupational health clinic
    - If medical attention is needed, call 9-1-1
    - Work with local public health authorities to determine if additional action is needed
  - Prevent contact with potentially infectious body fluids
    - Only trained professionals or contract company with proper personal protective equipment (PPE) should clean surfaces contaminated with potentially infectious body fluids
    - The state or local health department can help to locate these services
  - Make a record of everyone who came in contact with the sick employee or customer or potentially infectious body fluids
Resources

CDC guidance
- Proper hand washing techniques (www.cdc.gov/handwashing/)
- Workplace Safety and Health, Ebola (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/default.html)
- U.S. Residence Decontamination (http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/residential-decontamination.html)

CDC infographics
Resources

CDC Travelers’ Health
- Travelers’ Health (http://www.cdc.gov/travel)
- Travel notices (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices)
- TravWell App (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/apps-about#travwell)
- Health information for international travel (the Yellow Book) (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/yellowbook-home-2014)
- Infographics for Travelers (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/infographics-travelers)

CDC for business travelers
- Find a Clinic (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/find-clinic)
- Pack Smart (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/pack-smart)
- Travel health topic fact sheets (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/common-travel-health-topics)
- Travel insurance information (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/insurance)
Resources

Other Federal agencies and partners

- **Department of State:**
  - Air Ambulance/MedEvac/Medical Escort Providers ([http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html))
  - Emergency Resources ([http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies.html))

- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):**

- **World Health Organization (WHO):**
Effective Practices for Businesses’ Response to Pandemic Flu

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Education and Information Division
Objectives

• Provide a background on influenza viruses

• Describe business pandemic preparedness recommendations

• Provide resources for implementing preparedness plans
Routes of Transmission

• **Respiratory route**
  - Large droplets when coughing and sneezing
  - Possible small particle “short distance” aerosols

• **Contact**
  - Surface to hand contact, followed by touching mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth)

• **Requires close contact**
Influenza Viruses

- Can survive at low temperatures and low humidity for days to weeks
- Can survive on surfaces
  - 24-48 hours (nonporous)
  - < 8-12 hours (porous)
- Hands
  - 3 hours to <5 min
- Banknotes
  - Several days based on initial concentrations and protective matrix
CDC Business Guidance

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/flu/pandemic-resources/
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/business/index.htm
OSHA Workplace Guidance

www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html#introduction
OSHA Risk-Based Approach

- Very High & High Exposures (healthcare)
- Medium Exposure (school teachers, retail employees)
- Lower Exposure (office employees)
Evaluating Risk

- Pursuing approaches to evaluating occupations in the Medium Risk category described in OSHA’s influenza guidance
  - Represents a wide range of occupations and settings
  - Control banding approach
Preparedness and Response Recommendations
Develop or Review Your Current Flu Plan

- Involve your employees
- Align actions to local outbreak and severity
- Conduct exercises to test plan
- Share plan with employees and explain:
  - Policies
  - Leave options
  - Pay and benefits
- Remain flexible
Develop or Review Your Current Flu Plan

- Engage your state and local health department
  - Understand methods for communicating local outbreak information and recommendations

- Coordinate and communicate plans with community/companies in your supply chain

- Plan for absenteeism and cross train employees
Components of a Flu Plan

- Implement multiple measures
- Encourage vaccination against flu (seasonal and pandemic when available)
- Advise the sick to stay home
- Separate sick employees and advise to go home
Components of a Flu Plan

- Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposable receptacles
  - Provide hand sanitizers in common areas
Components of a Flu Plan

• Routine environmental cleaning
  – Routinely clean commonly touched surfaces
  – Provide disposable wipes for employee use

• Increase social distancing
  – Minimize face-to-face interactions
  – Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between people
  – Increase teleworking and use staggered work shifts
Components of a Flu Plan

• Engineering controls
  – Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards
  – Install drive-through windows for customer service
Components of a Flu Plan

• Personal protective equipment
  – Facemasks or face shields
    • Do not form a seal to the face
  – Respirators
    • Require medical clearance and fit testing
    • Generally not recommended for medium risk workers
  – Gloves
In Conclusion

• Review and update pandemic influenza preparedness plans

• Be flexible and prepare for multiple scenarios

• Implement good practices to protect against seasonal colds and flu
Thank you

Todd Niemeier MS, CIH
rbn4@cdc.gov
513-533-8166