



Ebola Outbreak: Advice for Humanitarian Aid Organizations

Current Situation

An outbreak of Ebola has been ongoing in West Africa since March 2014. This outbreak is affecting Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and is the largest outbreak of Ebola in history. The situation in West Africa is changing rapidly, and other countries might experience imported cases or outbreaks. Instances of civil unrest and violence against aid workers have been reported in West Africa as a result of the outbreak. The public health systems in the affected countries are being severely strained as the outbreak grows.

CDC is recommending that US residents avoid nonessential travel to Guinea (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-guinea>), Liberia (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-liberia>), and Sierra Leone (</travel/notices/warning/ebola-sierra-leone>) because of widespread outbreaks. CDC is closely monitoring the situation in West Africa and will update travel recommendations as needed.

Since it is important that humanitarian aid work continue in the region, CDC is providing these recommendations to humanitarian aid organizations to help them prepare to safely send employees and volunteers to the region. Organizations can also direct employees and volunteers to CDC's [advice for humanitarian aid workers](/travel/page/humanitarian-workers-ebola) (</travel/page/humanitarian-workers-ebola>) traveling to West Africa.

Recommendations for Humanitarian Aid Organizations

Humanitarian aid workers play an important role in the Ebola outbreak response. The key to controlling this outbreak is to focus on stopping the spread of Ebola at its source. Healthcare and management experts who have specialized skills and experience working in this kind of environment are needed to help in countries with Ebola.

All aid workers should be affiliated with a recognized humanitarian aid organization.





If your organization is sending employees and volunteers to areas where outbreaks of Ebola are occurring, CDC recommends that your organization take precautions to protect their health and safety.

Learn more about [CDC's Safety Training Course for Healthcare Workers Going to West Africa in Response to the 2014 Ebola Outbreak](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html>).

Before Employees and Volunteers Leave

Learn more about [CDC's Safety Training Course for Healthcare Workers Going to West Africa in Response to the 2014 Ebola Outbreak](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html>).

- Provide education to employees and volunteers about Ebola. For relevant information, see CDC's [Ebola Virus Disease website](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>). Suggested topics include:
 - How Ebola is spread and [signs and symptoms](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/symptoms/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/symptoms/index.html>) of Ebola.
 - Ways for people to [avoid exposure to Ebola](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/index.html>), including the proper use of personal protective equipment.
 - The kinds of contact that result in exposure to Ebola.
 - Procedures for reporting exposure or illness.
 - Procedures for self-monitoring:
 - After an exposure while in a country with an Ebola outbreak.
 - On return from a country with an Ebola outbreak.

- Exit screenings at airports.
- Encourage employees and volunteers to complete a pre-deployment health screening to establish whether they have the physical and emotional fitness to perform in this setting.
- CDC recommends that your employees and volunteers visit a travel medicine provider, ideally 4-6 weeks before they travel, to discuss specific health recommendations based on their health history. Even if they are leaving sooner, a visit to a travel medicine provider is still helpful.
- Check if employees and volunteers are up-to-date on routine vaccines (</travel/diseases/routine>), as well as any other vaccines, medicines, and information they may need for their destination.
- If the employees and volunteers will be working in healthcare settings or in close contact with people who are sick with Ebola, provide them with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) based on the type of work being conducted. Recommended PPE includes facemasks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection—either a face shield (preferred) or goggles; other PPE may be needed depending on the setting. Learn more about recommended PPE and other infection control procedures in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Infection prevention and control guidance for care of patients in health-care settings, with focus on Ebola (http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>).
 - Because of the current outbreak, supplies of PPE in-country are limited. Organizations should make sure employees and volunteers have enough supplies or that there is a mechanism in place to provide them in-country.
- Check the health insurance plan and benefits your organization offers to learn what is covered in the event that an employee becomes ill. CDC recommends that anyone traveling to countries where outbreaks of Ebola are occurring have full coverage, including coverage for emergency medical evacuation.
- Make arrangements for medical evacuation in the event that an employee or volunteer becomes ill with Ebola or any other serious illness or injury.
 - Information about medical evacuation services can be found on the US Department of State's Air Ambulance/MedEvac/Medical Escort Providers (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/evacuation.html>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) page.
 - Some insurance providers are excluding medical evacuation coverage for people who have Ebola. Check with providers to ensure employees and volunteers have needed coverage.
 - Be sure to check the coverage limits for evacuation insurance. Also check to see if the policy covers evacuation to the United States or to the nearest location where adequate medical care is offered.
 - Also, consider medical evacuation plans for non-US citizens.
- Develop a plan for bringing volunteers and employees back to the United States or their home country if they are exposed to Ebola but do not have symptoms.
 - Because we are facing the biggest and most complex Ebola outbreak in history, travel restrictions have been established that may affect whether employees and volunteers are allowed to travel on commercial flights if they have been exposed to Ebola. Exposed people can either wait to travel until after the 21-day incubation period for Ebola or travel on charter flights. See Interim Guidance for Monitoring and Movement of Persons with Ebola Virus Disease Exposure (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>) to learn more.
 - Due to the expense of charter flights, your organization might want to coordinate with other aid organizations to provide charter flights for employees and volunteers who cannot travel on commercial flights.
- Healthcare resources in West Africa may be limited or not available. Before your organization sends employees or volunteers there, identify places where they can get healthcare during their trip. The US embassy (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) in the country can help locate medical services.
 - Check on their visa status, and advise the employees and volunteers to register with the US embassy in the destination country through the US Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) (<https://step.state.gov/step/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>).

While Employees and Volunteers are in Areas Where Outbreaks of Ebola are Occurring

General Recommendations for Preventing Ebola

Ebola is spread through direct, unprotected contact with the blood or body fluids (such as urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of an infected symptomatic person, contact with the body of someone who has died from Ebola, contact with infected animals, and exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected blood or other body fluids and tissues.

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Ebola, and many people who get the disease die. Therefore, remind employees and volunteers that it is important to take steps to prevent Ebola.

- Practice careful hygiene. For example, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid contact with the blood and body fluids (such as urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of people who have Ebola.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- Avoid direct contact with the body of someone who has died from Ebola, including participating in funeral or burial rituals.
- Avoid contact with animals (such as bats or monkeys) or with raw or undercooked meat.
- Do not eat or handle bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food).
- Avoid hospitals in West Africa where Ebola patients are being treated, unless necessary.
- Report any potential unprotected Ebola exposure or illness promptly using the organization's reporting procedures.

Special Recommendations for Preventing Ebola While Working in Healthcare Settings

If your organization's employees or volunteers will be working in healthcare settings, they should be prepared to care for patients in a region where resources are scarce and the healthcare system is strained. CDC is offering a [safety training course for healthcare workers going to West Africa in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/safety-training-course/index.html>). Refer to WHO's [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Care of Patients in Health-Care Settings, with Focus on Ebola](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/) (http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/) [Ⓞ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>), even if your organization does not plan to work directly with Ebola patients.

Before Employees and Volunteers Return Home

In countries where an Ebola outbreak is occurring travelers are being screened at the airports for Ebola exposure and signs of illness before they are allowed to board flights. Those who have been exposed will not be allowed to travel on commercial flights to the United States and potentially to other countries. Have a plan in place for how to assess the exposure risk of employees and volunteers before they return home, and follow [CDC's guidance](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>) for making sure they can return without exposing others.

Recommendations if an Employee or Volunteer Is Exposed to Ebola or Develops Symptoms

- Advise people to notify your organization if they suspect exposure to Ebola.
- Have employees and volunteers monitor themselves for symptoms for 21 days after suspected exposure to Ebola.
 - They should take their temperature every morning and evening to check for fever and watch for other Ebola symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.
- Help employees and volunteers seek medical care immediately if they develop fever (100.4°F / 38°C or higher) or other Ebola symptoms.
- Contact the nearest [US embassy or consulate](http://www.usembassy.gov/) (<http://www.usembassy.gov/>) [Ⓞ](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>). The embassy or consulate will help you make arrangements for medical evacuation and to determine where the person can be taken for medical care. (Your organization is encouraged to identify these resources in advance.) Note that costs of medical evacuation are not the responsibility of the US government.
- If your organization is bringing an exposed employee or volunteer to the United States, contact the state public health authorities where the person will be brought for treatment.
 - Each state and local health department may have its own protocol for how to respond to a person who has been exposed to Ebola, so the regulations that the person follows once home might vary.

After Employees and Volunteers Return to the United States

If employees or volunteers [have a known exposure to Ebola](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html>) during their trip, advise them to call their doctors even if they do not have symptoms. Their doctors should evaluate their exposure level and consult with public health authorities to determine whether testing for Ebola, monitoring for symptoms, or travel restrictions are necessary.

Have employees and volunteers pay attention to their health after they return, even if they were not exposed to Ebola during their trip.

- They should monitor their health for 21 days if they were in an area with an Ebola outbreak.
 - Take their temperature every morning and evening.
 - Watch for other Ebola symptoms: severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.
 - If their temperature is 100.4°F (38°C) or higher or they have any other Ebola symptoms, they should seek medical care immediately.
 - Tell the doctor about their recent travel and symptoms before they go to the doctor's office or hospital. Advance notice will help the doctor care for them and protect other people who may be in the doctor's office or hospital.
 - Limit contact with other people when they travel to the doctor; avoid public transportation.
 - Do not travel anywhere except to the doctor's office or hospital.
- During the time they are monitoring their health, employees or volunteers can continue their normal activities, including work.

More Information

- See [CDC Travelers' Health – Destinations \(/travel/destinations/list\)](/travel/destinations/list) for destination-specific recommendations for safe and healthy travel.
- [Advice for Humanitarian Aid Workers Traveling to Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone during the Ebola Outbreak \(/travel/page/humanitarian-workers-ebola\)](/travel/page/humanitarian-workers-ebola)
- [Humanitarian Aid Workers \(/travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers\)](/travel/page/humanitarian-aid-workers)
- [2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/index.html)
- [CDC Ebola website \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/)
- [Ebola Information for Health Care Workers \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/index.html)
- [Infection prevention and control guidance for care of patients in health-care settings, with focus on Ebola \(http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/\)](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/filovirus_infection_control/en/) <http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>
- [Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers: Infection Control Posters for the African Health Care Setting \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/ic-posters.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/abroad/ic-posters.html)
- [Ebola Workplace Safety and Health \(http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/)
- [Interim Guidance for Monitoring and Movement of Persons with Ebola Virus Disease Exposure \(http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/monitoring-and-movement-of-persons-with-exposure.html)

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