



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont is Carefully Monitoring Travelers from Ebola-affected Regions



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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health has requested a Vermonter who has just returned from West Africa to enter voluntary quarantine and active monitoring for fever or symptoms of Ebola for 21 days. This individual agreed, and began quarantine on Oct. 27.

This person does not have an elevated temperature, has no signs or symptoms of illness and is not a health risk to anyone at this time. A person infected with Ebola cannot pass the infection on to others until he or she has symptoms – and then only through direct contact with bodily fluids. Ebola is not an airborne virus.

Public health and law enforcement officials from Vermont met this individual at JFK International Airport on Oct. 27, and provided transport back to Vermont.

Federal officials assessed this person before allowing travel back to the U.S. and concluded there was not a health risk to the traveling public. The reason for the Vermont Health Department to request quarantine in this circumstance is that the individual was in the West African countries of Guinea and Sierra Leone with the stated intention of personally investigating the Ebola epidemic in those countries, and while he has represented himself in public statements as a physician, he is not licensed as a doctor or health professional in Vermont. He was not traveling or affiliated with any governmental, public health, medical or aid organization.

“We do not know whether this person had exposure to the virus while in West Africa,” said acting Health Commissioner Tracy Dolan. “Because we can’t determine this – and combined with what we know about this person’s unsupervised travel, intent to help as a medical doctor, and his statements – we are taking the precaution of quarantine while we actively monitor temperature and symptoms for 21 days.”

Twenty-one days is the longest it can take from the time a person is infected with Ebola until that person has symptoms of Ebola. Any individual returning to Vermont from the affected countries will be actively monitored during that time and, depending on individual circumstances, active monitoring may include voluntary or mandatory quarantine.

This action is being taken both to protect others and ensure this person receives early and high quality care in the unlikely event that illness develops. Throughout the 21 days of quarantine, this individual will receive twice-daily health checks, plus food, shelter and other comforts. Local public health officials will be monitoring and in contact with this individual throughout quarantine.

To protect privacy and security, neither this person’s identity nor the location of quarantine will be released by the state.

Quarantine and Active Monitoring

Quarantine is a well established, although rarely used, public health action that separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. If a person is under quarantine, it means that he or she must stay in their home or at an alternate location deemed appropriate by the Health Department.

Active monitoring means that health officials stay in daily contact – by phone or other technology and/or visit for the entire 21 days following a person’s last possible date of exposure to Ebola virus.

If a traveler begins to show symptoms, the Health Department will take immediate action to implement protocols to transport the patient to a designated facility such as Fletcher Allen Health Care. The Health Department has been

working closely with health care providers and hospitals to prepare in the event a symptomatic individual requires treatment.

About Ebola

Ebola is a dangerous viral disease that is epidemic in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where public health and health care infrastructure has been insufficient to control its spread.

Ebola is only spread through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of a person who is sick or has died from Ebola. Health care workers or people caring for patients with Ebola or the dead are most at risk of contracting the disease.

Ebola is NOT spread by casual contact. It is not spread through the air, water or food produced in the U.S. Ebola does not spread easily from person to person like the flu, measles or active tuberculosis.

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