

State of Vermont**Department of Health**

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Agency of Human Services

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TO: VT EMS Services**FROM: VT Department of Health**

(Prepared by: Chelsea Dubie, M.Ed., EMT, Epidemiologist- Infectious Diseases)

RE: Ebola Virus: Guidance for EMS Providers and Medical First Responders

The current Ebola outbreak in West Africa has increased the possibility of patients with Ebola traveling from affected countries to the United States. As EMS providers who are often dispatched to unpredictable environments with limited patient information, it is important to understand the symptoms and risks of Ebola to ensure that you and your crew are safe. The risk of contracting Ebola is very low unless you have direct contact with the body fluids, blood, excretions, or secretions (like urine, saliva, sweat, vomit) from a *symptomatic* Ebola patient. In addition to scene safety and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), it is essential to practice standard, contact and droplet precautions.

Some of the symptoms of Ebola can be similar to calls that we typically respond to as EMS providers, including fever (at or greater than 101.5°F), muscle pain, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pains. Consider asking about travel history if your patient presents with these symptoms. If your patient has recently traveled to a West African country where the Ebola outbreak is occurring (Nigeria, Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone), ask about the following risk factors:

Within the past **3 weeks** before onset of symptoms, has your patient:

- Had any contact with blood or body fluids of a patient with known or suspected Ebola?
- Had any direct handling of bats, rodents, or non-human primates from the countries associated with the outbreak?

If **NO**, continue with normal EMS care. If **YES** to any of these risk factors:

- Additional PPE may be required depending on amount of blood or body fluids, including:
 - Fluid resistant gown
 - Eye protection
 - Facemask
- Limit activities that increase the risk of exposure to infectious material (e.g. use of needles, CPR, airway management)
- Limit the use of needles and other sharps as much as possible. If sharps are used, handle them with extreme care

If you suspect your patient has Ebola, immediately notify the hospital so that appropriate infection control measures may be taken prior to the patient's arrival.



Ebola poses no significant risk to the United States and the risk of contracting Ebola is very low unless you have direct contact with blood or bodily fluids. If you have further questions, contact Infectious Disease Epidemiology or the Emergency Medical Services Office at the Vermont Department of Health.

Infectious Disease Epidemiology at the VT Department of Health: (802) 863-7240
EMS Office at the Vermont Department of Health: 802-863-7310

Check out the CDC Ebola page for more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/> or

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/interim-guidance-emergency-medical-services-systems-911-public-safety-answering-points-management-patients-known-suspected-united-states.html>

