

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI Health Department Warns Of Ebola, Residents Asked To Be Vigilant

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While there are currently no confirmed cases of Ebola in the territory, the Virgin Islands Department of Health (DOH) has issued an alert warning residents of the deadly virus and have outlined steps the Department has taken to be prepared in the event an Ebola case is identified locally.

"We want to reassure residents that we are implementing the precautionary measures to quickly identify and stop the spread of the virus in the territory," Health Commissioner Darice Plaskett said in a press release, alluding to the recent Ebola case in Texas that has received extensive media coverage.

The release stated: "The Department of Health has taken proactive measures to ensure readiness by conducting clinical education on Ebola and issuing guidance to the district hospitals, healthcare partners and emergency medical personnel on early detection, safe clinical management, and infection control measures.

The Department of Health met last week with officials from the hospitals, federally qualified health centers, and Customs and Border Protection to discuss steps that can be taken to prevent the spread of the disease. These representatives were also provided with CDC's resources, including a hospital and healthcare provider preparedness checklist for Ebola and Ebola screening criteria template for hospitals."

Ebola is an infectious and generally fatal disease marked by fever and severe internal bleeding. It is spread through contact with infected bodily fluids. Its host species is unknown.

Ebola symptoms include:

- Fever (greater than 38.6°C or 101.5°F)
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the virus, but the average is 8 to 10 days.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive clinical care and the patient's immune response. People who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years.

"The Department of Health is directing the hospitals and healthcare Providers to follow protocols established by CDC to effectively detect a potentially infected patient, protect others from exposure and respond with appropriate patient care. The district hospitals' emergency room triage procedures now include screening assessment for Ebola, such as travel history to an Ebola-affected area in the last 21 days," the release added.

Prevention

- Wash hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid contact with blood and bodily fluids of any person, particularly someone who is sick
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or bodily fluids
- Do not touch the body of someone who has died from Ebola
- Do not touch or eat bats and nonhuman primates or their blood
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated

The Centers for Disease Control has issued a travel warning for countries in West Africa that are currently affected by the Ebola outbreak, including Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone,

Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. ***US residents are strongly advised to avoid nonessential travel to these destinations.*** If you must travel (for example, to do humanitarian aid work in response to the outbreak) protect yourself by following [CDC's advice](#) for avoiding contact with the blood and bodily fluids of Ebola patients or those who have died from the virus.

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