

# **MEMBER ALERT**



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## **EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE IN WEST AFRICA**

Members' attention is drawn to the growing concerns in regard to the spread of the Ebola virus disease in West Africa, in particular, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Ebola disease is particularly severe and is often fatal. Those infected require intensive medical support and care. Infection is transmitted through direct contact with the blood, body fluids and tissues of infected animals or persons. The disease is highly contagious.

### **Recommendations**

Members are urged to take proper precautions to prevent the infection and spread of the Ebola virus disease if they are trading in the West Africa region. The most important thing is to stay informed.

The websites of both the World Health Organization (WHO) (<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>) and the American Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/index.html>) are excellent sources of up-to-date information on the locations of outbreaks, travel advisories, prevention, treatment and other useful information.

More specifically, as they concern ship operations in the region, Members are recommended to take the following precautions:

1. *Prevention.*
  - a. Members are advised to familiarize themselves with all up-to-date travel advisories (as found on the WHO or CDC websites) to stay current as to conditions in the affected regions.
  - b. Members should take proper precautions regarding location for crew transfers and consider procedures how to manage visitors on board ship including agents, stevedores, surveyors, etc. to prevent the spread of the disease to the ship.
  - c. To prevent contracting the disease, seafarers are recommended to:
    - i. Take shore leave in the infected areas on an "only if necessary" basis.

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- ii. Practice careful hygiene. Avoid contact with blood and body fluids of severely ill people. Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids.
- iii. Avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola virus disease.
- iv. Avoid contact with animals or with raw meat.
- v. Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. Embassies may be able to provide advice on facilities that are suitable for your needs.
- vi. Seek medical care if they develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eyes.

## 2. *Recognition of infection and preventing further spread of the disease.*

The CDC, in conjunction with the WHO, has developed a set of guidelines to prevent and control the spread of the Ebola virus disease entitled, "Infection Control for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers In the African Health Care Setting". This can be found at the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention/index.html>. The manual describes how to recognize cases of Ebola virus disease and prevent further transmission in health care settings by using locally available materials and minimum financial resources.

## 3. *Recognizing symptoms of the Ebola virus disease.*

Seafarers should be aware of the symptoms of the virus. The CDC specifies these as follows:

- fever;
- headache;
- joint and muscle aches;
- weakness;
- diarrhea;
- vomiting;
- stomach pain; and/or
- lack of appetite

In addition, some patients may experience:

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- a rash;
- red eyes;
- hiccups;
- cough;
- sore throat;
- chest pain;
- difficulty breathing;
- difficulty swallowing; and/or
- bleeding inside and outside of the body

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to the Ebola virus though 8-10 days is most common.

4. *Actions to be taken if a crew member shows symptoms of the virus on board ship.*

Members are advised to follow the guidelines as set forth by the WHO for international travel and health, Section 3.3, "Recommendations for ships". These can be found at the WHO website at <http://www.who.int/ith/updates/20140421/en/>.

5. *Status of ports in the West African region.*

The following is the current status the outbreaks in the region and any restrictions and policies for ports in those countries. It should be remembered that policy can change at any time. Members should check with their local agents prior to arrival. Travel advisory updates can be found on the CDC website (above), and the Budd, S.A. website at [http://www.budd-pni.com/news-art-the-budd-group.asp?ID\\_A=1247](http://www.budd-pni.com/news-art-the-budd-group.asp?ID_A=1247).

a. Guinea

Guinea was the first West African country to be affected by the present outbreak. After a temporary lull, WHO reports that new cases of infection seem to be increasing once again. Active surveillance for the disease now continues in the Conakry, Guéckédou, Kissidougou, Macenta, Dabola, Djingaraye, Boffa, Dubreka and Fria Districts.

The ports are functioning normally.

b. Liberia

The Liberian President has announced that "communities that are seriously affected will be quarantined and travels in and out of such communities restricted" and that the major border crossing points were being closed.

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According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Ebola cases have been reported in the following areas of Liberia: Lofa, Montserado, Margibi, Bomi, Bong and Nimba Counties.

The ports are functioning normally.

c. Sierra Leone

Cases have been reported in the following districts: Kailahun, Kenema, Kambia, Port Loko, Western and Bo.

The Government of Sierra Leone closed all schools and banned public gatherings in the Kailahun district due to the Ebola outbreak. Weekly markets on the Sierra Leone side of the Guinean border have been closed down until further notice.

All vehicles and their passengers entering and leaving Kailahun district must undergo screening by the authorities at checkpoints. Demonstrations and local disturbances were reported in Kenema and Freetown where the port is still working.

d. Nigeria

Following the incident described above, the Nigerian airline, Air Arik, has suspended all flights into Ebola-affected countries and called for the suspension of all inbound flights to Nigeria from Ebola-affected countries.

In the meantime, the Nigerian government has announced that all its entry points have been put on red alert.

The ports are functioning normally.

e. Senegal

Senegal has re-opened its borders with Guinea.

## **Further information**

Should Members have any questions, your Managers would be happy to address them. In this regard, Members should contact Dr. William Moore, Senior Vice President – Loss Prevention at [william.moore@american-club.com](mailto:william.moore@american-club.com).