

Examples of Ebola Policies & Procedures that Some Companies Have Developed

Several AAOHN members agreed to share the Ebola policies, procedures and communications that they have put in place over the past few months. Some of these may be helpful as you review, revise or develop your employer's protocols to control and reduce the risk of contamination within your organization.

Note: The examples presented here are samples of what other occupational and environmental health nurses and their employers have done. They are not intended to provide specific medical, healthcare or legal advice. Information and recommendations about how to deal with this virus and how to protect workers and the public rapidly changes and this information may as rapidly become inconsistent with immediate and current recommended practice. Readers should consult with the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention – The Premier Resource for Ebola prevention and control recommendations](#) and develop policies and procedures for your employer and its employees that are appropriate for the circumstance.

Example #5

Employee Communication, including Travel Restrictions

Helping to Ensure Your Safety

Interoffice Memorandum-For Internal Use Only

To: All XYZ Company Employees Date: XXXXX

From: XXX, VP, Human Resources and XXX, VP, Environment, Health and Safety

Since March 2014, West Africa has experienced the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak in history. The situation is changing rapidly and global health organizations are preparing for the potential spread of this severe disease to other countries, as evidenced by the recent cases in the U.S. and Spain. The health and safety of our employees is a top priority and a core value for XYZ Company. To help ensure your safety, we are taking the following precautions:

Restrictions on Business Travel

Business travel to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria is prohibited. If you have travel questions, contact XYZ Company, VP, Corporate Services and Administration.

Personal Travel Guidance

If you plan to visit one of these areas for personal reasons, please contact your healthcare provider and your regional XXX Occupational Health (OH) professional (names listed in the Q&A) regarding the risks of this travel as well as precautions you may be able to take.

Once you return from your personal trip, notify your manager as well as your regional OH professional, who will conduct a confidential phone screening to determine the probability of contact with Ebola-infected individuals. If you are considered "at risk," you will be required to remain away from work for a period of time determined by your last potential exposure.

[An example is that one employee has been restricted. He was married in Guinea and had a reception with 400 attendees. He stayed at home on administrative leave for 21 days. Another example is that an employee that will be going on a medical mission and will be screened and restricted when he returns].

General Guidance for Employees

During this global health event and considering that we are entering flu season, all employees are encouraged to exercise self-protective infection control practices. Protect yourself by avoiding individuals with infectious disease symptoms. Routine seasonal flu vaccination is recommended, and frequent hand washing remains an important personal defense.

Additional information about Ebola is available from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [World Health Organization](#). We will provide additional updates on the outbreak as the situation evolves and/or our travel guidance to employees change.

We have prepared answers to some questions you may have about the steps we are taking to ensure the health and safety of all XYZ Company employees. Click for some Frequently Asked Questions (see below).

Employee Communication cont. Frequently Asked Questions & Answers – XYZ Company Actions on the Ebola Epidemic

1. Who are the XYZ regional Occupational Health (OH) contacts?

The following XYZ regional Occupational Health professionals have been identified to perform telephonic screening for Ebola (see **Sample Ebola Telephone Screening Guideline**). Please reach out to the following regional representatives:

XXXX
XXXX
XXXX

2. If I undergo the screening and am required to stay at home, will I be paid?

If you are advised to stay home for a period of time, work with your manager to determine if your work can be performed from home. If you are unable to perform your work from home, you will be placed on paid leave.

3. If I am cleared to come back to work but develop symptoms later, how will this be handled?

If you are not considered "at risk," you will be cleared to return to work and will be provided with a list of symptoms that could appear up to three weeks following your return date from travel. If any symptoms develop, you will be referred to your personal healthcare provider for treatment. In this situation, employees will not be allowed back into the workplace without medical certification from their personal healthcare provider that they are not infectious.

4. **If I need to visit a hospital or clinic as part of my job, what should I do differently?**

[Applicable for salesforce who call on hospitals.]

Employees should always follow infection control protocols in place at their customer hospitals and healthcare institutions and observe standard infection control practices. Field personnel are advised not to enter the immediate areas where Ebola patients are being treated. If you are concerned about being in a hospital you should inform your manager or call a regional OH professional for guidance.

5. **Individuals have been diagnosed with Ebola in the U.S. and Spain. Why is travel still permitted to these countries? What if the epidemic expands to other countries?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health organizations have placed West African nations on their warning lists since the situation in those areas is most dire. The U.S. and Spain are not considered to pose significant risks requiring travel restrictions at this time. If the situation changes, XYZ will issue additional travel guidance.

6. **What about employees or regular contractors who have family or visitors staying with them from an Ebola-affected country?**

Employees or contractors who have visitors or family members who have recently been in an Ebola-affected country should call the XYZ regional OH professional listed above and discuss the risks that may be associated with their particular situation.

7. **If I have a general question about Ebola, whom should I contact?**

If you have general questions about Ebola, we recommend that you first visit the websites provided below or read the [general information posted on the XYZ intranet](#). For further information, contact your local OH professional or your personal healthcare provider.

8. **Are contractors on site at XYZ facilities going to follow this same process?**

We are reaching out through various channels to contractors with employees on site at XYZ. We expect them to follow the same procedure.

9. **I have a trip planned to West Africa. Will my manager prevent me from going?**

We cannot prevent employees or contractors from undertaking personal travel to Ebola-affected countries. You will be advised of the risks associated with that travel and will be required to go through confidential screening with one of our XYZ regional OH professionals prior to returning to work.

About Ebola

- Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever (Ebola HF or Ebola) is a severe, often fatal, contagious disease, spread through contact with bodily fluids from an infected individual. Ebola is caused by infection with a virus of the family *Filoviridae*, genus *Ebolavirus*.
- Symptoms of Ebola typically appear within 2-21 days (8-10 days is most common) following infection, and the illness runs its course within 14-21 days of symptom onset. When infection occurs, symptoms usually begin abruptly.
- In humans, the virus can be transmitted in several ways, including direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected person and exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions.

Visit the U.S. [Center for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) for a list of countries where Ebola has been diagnosed and additional information. [The World Health Organization](#) also has current information.

Sample Ebola Telephone Screening Guideline

Date: _____

(Based on CDC Algorithm for Ebola Exposure Screening for Healthcare Settings)

Name of Employee:

Name of Employee's Manager:

Employee Number:

Interviewed by:

Date of interview:

Dates of travel:

Countries visited:

Purpose of trip:

-
1. Did you have contact with a sick person or anyone with symptoms (fever, chills, nausea, bleeding, vomiting, headache, etc.) during your trip to the [Ebola-affected country](#) or during your return?
 2. Did you go into any health care facility or clinic during your trip?
 3. Do you have an elevated temperature (subjective or $\geq 101.5^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 38.6°C)?
Temperature reported by employee:
 4. Do you have any of the following symptoms?
(headache, weakness, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain or hemorrhage)

If the answers to 1 or 2 are “yes”, advise the employee to stay at home for 21 days from the day they left the Ebola-infected country. Advise the employee to take their temperature twice daily and notify health authorities immediately if it is elevated.

If the answers to 3 or 4 are “yes”, advise the employee to see their healthcare provider as soon as possible.

If the answers to all questions are “no”, the employee can be cleared to return to work and cautioned to be alert for any developing symptoms. Advise the employee to take their temperature twice daily for 21 days and notify health authorities immediately if it is elevated.

Determination: **Employee Cleared to Return to Work** for ___ day **Employee referred to personal physician** **Employee to remain at home**

The following categories are provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

High Risk Exposure

Percutaneous (e.g., needle stick) or mucous membrane contact with blood or body fluids from an Ebola Viral Disease (EVD) patient

OR

Direct skin contact with, or exposure to blood or body fluids of, an EVD patient

OR

Processing blood or body fluids from an EVD patient without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) or biosafety precautions

OR

Direct contact with a dead body (including during funeral rites) in an Ebola affected area without appropriate PPE

Low Risk Exposure

Household members of an EVD patient and others who had brief direct contact (e.g., shaking hands) with an EVD patient without appropriate PPE

OR

Healthcare personnel in facilities with confirmed or probable EVD patients who have been in the care area for a prolonged period of time while not wearing recommended PPE

*= Ebola Virus Disease