

Ebola Outbreak: Ethiopian Airlines takes precautions; Ebola committee established

8th August 2014

Ethiopian Airlines, which operates an extensive flight network connecting West African countries to other parts of the world, announced that it has put in place precautions to combat Ebola, which is currently spreading in West Africa.

In a statement, Ethiopian Airlines said:

“The safety and well-being of our customers and staff always come first...Ethiopian has taken the lead in taking extraordinary precautions in connection with the outbreak of the disease in some parts of West Africa...Ethiopian has already implemented the following measures to ensure to the maximum extent the safety of its customers and staff:

- *Frontline staff of Ethiopian both on-ground at airports and on-board have and are being continuously given information on the disease, its mode of transmission and how keep safe;*
- *More specifically, staff have been sensitized and trained so that they avoid coming into contact with bodily fluids while doing their work;*
- *Stringent and specific surveillance is being carried out regarding all flights from West Africa at Addis Ababa airport.*
- *Ethiopian is continuously monitoring updates from the World Health Organization and other international and national bodies on the disease, its spread and recommended safety measures.*

Ethiopian will continue to closely monitor the situation and implement recommended measures with a view to ensure at all times the safety of its customers and staff.”

Similarly, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute announced that it has set up a national committee to put in place a plan to prevent and contain any possible outbreak of the deadly virus. The Committee members will include officials from the Ministry of Health, health professionals, Ethiopian Airlines and other stakeholders, and will draw up guidelines to prevent and contain the disease, of which will be made official soon.

Institute Deputy Director, Dr. Dadi Jimma said that the institute is working closely with different stakeholders to prevent the disease from entering Ethiopia, by preparing technical and other inputs necessary to pre-empt it. Preventive equipment and medicines have been readied, and preventive activities will be carried out in border areas and at airports.

Mesafint Alebachew, Officer with Addis Ababa City Administration Health Bureau, said the bureau, in addition to training health professionals, has raised public awareness about the disease, its causes, and ways of transmission and prevention.

Technical Officer for Preparedness, Surveillance and Response Program with World Health Organization, Dr. Keba Omar Jaiteh, said the Ethiopian government is doing a good job work to prevent the disease from entering the country. The WHO will support Ethiopia’s efforts and has donated equipment and prepared trained health professionals.

The Ebola virus disease is a severe, often fatal illness, with a death rate of up to 90%. In the current outbreak in West Africa, the majority of cases in humans have occurred as a result of human-to-human transmission. Infection occurs from direct contact through broken skin or mucous membranes with the blood, or other bodily fluids or secretions (stool, urine, saliva, semen) of infected people. Infection can also occur if broken skin or mucous membranes of a healthy person come into contact with environments that have become contaminated with an Ebola patient’s infectious fluids such as soiled clothing, bed linen, or used needles.

The incubation period, or the time interval from infection to onset of symptoms, is from 2 to 21 days. The patients become contagious once they begin to show symptoms. They are not contagious during the incubation period.

Ebola has never been reported in Ethiopia.

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