

Understanding HR Policies: Ebola and Pandemic Flu Planning



Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a severe disease that causes hemorrhagic fever in humans and animals. It is frequently fatal because it can cause severe internal bleeding and organ failure.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that while the 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest in history— with widespread transmission occurring in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and an estimated 4,500 deaths as of mid-October 2014—the risk for an Ebola outbreak in the US is very low. Health Canada shares that viewpoint.

EVD can spread through direct contact with blood, body fluids or tissues of infected persons, contact with infected animals, and contact with medical equipment such as needles that are contaminated with the virus. It is not spread through the air.

People in healthcare settings who treat Ebola-infected patients may be exposed to the virus if they are not wearing appropriate protective equipment, including masks, gowns and gloves. Healthcare experts say as long as precautions are carefully followed, the risk for contracting EVD is low.

As of Oct. 15, 2014, one EVD death has occurred in the US and two nurses who treated that person have since tested positive for Ebola. No Canadian cases have been confirmed to date.