

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

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## **Local Public Health and Hospitals preparing for Ebola**

The Panhandle Public Health District, Panhandle Region Medical Response System, local health care facilities and other partners routinely prepare for many types of emergencies. Emergency Preparedness Plans are in place for all types of hazards such as tornados or other weather related disasters, chemical spills and contagious diseases. Currently, PPHD and its partners are reviewing their emergency response plans and following the CDC's guidance to prepare for the safe management of a patient with suspected Ebola virus disease.

“Emergency preparedness is always a priority of local public health and the medical community,” states Melody Leisy, RN, Panhandle Region Medical Response System Coordinator with Panhandle Public Health District. “Health care facilities in the Panhandle are ensuring there are plans in place to quickly identify and isolate any patient who is suspected of having Ebola.”

Local health care facilities are preparing for an Ebola patient by designating specific areas for isolation, reviewing and practicing good use of personal protective equipment, and training all staff to be familiar with the signs and symptoms of Ebola and to ask patients about recent travel history. “Early recognition is critical for effective infection control to protect our health care workers and the community at large,” Leisy stated. First responders and dispatchers are also being educated to ask all patients about recent travel history and to quickly identify and isolate any patient suspected to have Ebola.

If you have recently traveled to an area with an Ebola outbreak or are concerned you may have been exposed to a person sick with Ebola contact your medical provider. Tell your doctor about your recent travel to West Africa or contact with a person who was sick with Ebola and your symptoms before you go to the doctor's office or emergency room. Calling before you go will help the staff care for you and protect other people.

The 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest in history affecting multiple countries in West Africa. Two imported case and two associated locally acquired cases in health care workers have been reported in the United States.

A person infected with Ebola can't spread the disease until symptoms appear. Signs and symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola, but the average is 8 to 10 days. Symptoms of Ebola include fever and symptoms like severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Ebola is spread through direct contact with blood and body fluids like urine feces, saliva, vomit, sweat, and semen of a person who is sick with Ebola. It may also spread through contact with objects that have been contaminated with the blood or body fluids of a person sick with Ebola. Ebola is not spread through the air, water, or food.

There is no FDA-approved vaccine available for Ebola. Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are under development, but they have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness. Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive clinical care and the patient's immune response. Once someone recovers from Ebola they can no longer spread the virus.

For additional information visit <http://www.cdc.gov/> or [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.