

**CDC Key Points  
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”)**

**February 13, 2020**

**MAIN KEY POINTS**

- There is an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness centered in China caused by a novel (new) coronavirus.
- The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) has named this virus “SARS-CoV-2.” The World Health Organization has named the disease associated with this virus coronavirus disease 2019 or “COVID-19.”
- This virus is able to spread from person-to-person and has caused disease ranging from mild to severe, including disease resulting in death.
- Most cases and most person-to-person spread with the new virus have occurred in mainland China, but outbreaks of COVID-19 have been detected outside of China too.
- Most COVID-19 outside of China have been associated with travel to or from China, but some person-to-person spread has been detected, including some community spread.
- The potential global public health threat posed by this virus is high, but right now, the immediate risk to most Americans is low.
- Fifteen cases of COVID-19 have been reported in the United States. Most cases of COVID-19 in the United States have been associated with travel from China but some person-to-person spread among close contacts of travelers has been seen.
- It’s important to note that this virus is not spreading in the community in the United States at this time.
- The vast majority of Americans have a low risk of exposure at this time.
- The greater risk is for people who have recently traveled to China or their close contacts.
- This is a rapidly evolving situation and the risk assessment for Americans may change.
- The federal government is working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners as well as public health partners to respond to this public health threat.
- The public health response is multi-layered, with the goal of detecting and minimizing introductions of this virus in the United States so as to reduce the spread and the impact of this virus.
- Strategies are in place to reduce the number of travelers from China and screen the remaining travelers from that country for illness, with people potentially being subject to a 14-day quarantine.
- These measures are likely to cause some disruption.
- The U.S. public health system also is on high alert to detect cases of COVID-19 and prevent further spread in the community.
- The success of response efforts now will determine what the coming days, weeks, and months will bring here in the United States.
- While leaning forward aggressively with the hope that we will be able to prevent community spread, we also are preparing for the worst.
- The current outbreak meets two criteria for a pandemic. It is a new virus and it is capable of person-to-person spread. If sustained person-to-person spread in the community takes hold outside in China, this will increase the likelihood that a global pandemic will result.

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Key Points continued

- Extensive work has been done over the past 15 years in the United States to prepare for an influenza pandemic.
- Influenza pandemic preparedness platforms and plans would be appropriate in the event that the current COVID-19 outbreak triggers a pandemic.
- Public health partners are encouraged to review their pandemic preparedness plans at this time.

### **SITUATION UPDATE**

- To date, 27 international locations (in addition to the U.S.) have reported confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- As of February 13, 2020, 15 infections with SARS-CoV-2 have been reported in the U.S. in seven states – Arizona, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.
  - To date, there have been 427 “persons under investigation” (PUIs) for possible COVID-19 reported to CDC, with 347 persons ruled out as negative. These data are updated regularly at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.
  - As part of efforts to detect cases of COVID-19 in the United States, CDC’s laboratory had tested more than 2,000 samples as of February 12.
- The two most recent cases of COVID-19 in the United States were identified in people who had recently returned from Wuhan, China on U.S. State Department chartered flights.
- They had been under federal quarantine for 14 days because of their recent exposure to widespread COVID-19 activity in Wuhan.
- No additional cases of COVID-19 have been detected among quarantined persons at this time.
- Yesterday, February 12, 195 people who were on the first (of five) chartered flight from Wuhan were released from quarantine.
- More than 600 people remain under quarantine.
- It is likely that additional cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection will be detected in the United States.
- Two instances of person-to-person spread with this virus in the United States have been detected, in both cases after close, prolonged contact with a returned traveler from Wuhan.
- CDC established a COVID-19 Incident Management System on January 7, 2020. On January 21, CDC activated its Emergency Operations Center to better provide ongoing support to the response.
  - As of February 7, more than 800 CDC staff members had been deployed to the response.
- CDC developed for real time Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (rRT-PCR) tests that can diagnose COVID-19 in respiratory samples from clinical specimens and began shipping those to U.S. states. During the initial verification of the test, performance issues were identified by some states.
- CDC has identified a problem in the manufacturing of one of the three controls used in the verification process of the test. This leads to an

inconclusive test result. CDC is remanufacturing the reagents that are not performing consistently. (See: "Laboratory Issues" for more information.)

- On February 1, CDC issued a [Health Alert Network \(HAN\)](#) update with some updates to previously posted guidance and, for the first time, guidance on clinical care of COVID-19 patients.
- On February 3, CDC issued "[Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019 Novel Coronavirus Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)" to provide US public health authorities and other partners with a framework for assessing and managing risk of potential exposures to COVID-19 and implementing public health actions based on a person's risk level and clinical presentation.
- CDC isolated the virus and sent to the NIH's [BEI Resources Repository](#) for use by the broad scientific community.
- CDC is uploading the full genetic sequence of viruses from all U.S. patients into GenBank as they become available.
- CDC is working with state and local health departments on investigations to trace contacts of the U.S. COVID-19 patients to detect person-to-person spread.
- As of February 12, CDC and Customs and Border (CBP) personnel had screened about 35,000 people with recent travel history to China at U.S. airports.
- CDC is preparing senior staff to support the WHO international senior technical mission being formed to work with Chinese public health counterparts to help improve understanding of this new disease, including learning more about transmissibility and severity.

## **DIAMOND PRINCESS**

### **Background**

- The Diamond Princess cruise ship with 3,711 persons, of which over 400 are American citizens, was quarantined at the port of Yokohama, Japan.
- This action was taken following the laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 in a passenger who had disembarked on January 25.
- As of February 12, 174 passengers on the ship have been confirmed as having the virus.

### **Government of Japan Disembarkation Plan**

- Over the next several days, Japanese health officials will begin a voluntary disembarkation of passengers.
- It is CDC's understanding that this will be a phased approach, with the most medically vulnerable passengers in the first phase, including older adults with pre-existing health conditions.
- Passengers in this phase 1 group will be tested for SARS-CoV-2.
  - If the test is positive, the passenger will be transported to a local hospital for further evaluation and isolation.
  - If the test is negative, the passenger will be given the option to leave the ship and be transported to a quarantine housing facility. If a passenger does not want to go to the quarantine facilities, they must remain on the ship.

- This process will take time, and not everyone may be offered a chance to disembark before the end of the quarantine period.
- The Government of Japan has stated that the disembarkation will conform to CDC-approved protocols to prevent spread, and if this is effective, transfer to these facilities will not affect the original quarantine time frame.

### **What is CDC / USG doing?**

- CDC is working in close collaboration with Japanese health authorities to ensure precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of illness on the Diamond Princess cruise ship.
- CDC has deployed a subject matter expert to assist the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. Four CDC experts are deployed to Japan to assist the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.
- The US Government is in contact with American passengers and crew members and is providing ongoing recommendations to help protect their health.
- On February 11, CDC organized multidisciplinary interagency working group, comprised of epidemiology, infection prevention control, and quarantine procedures, to engage with the Government of Japan.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- While the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat:
  - It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
  - If you are a healthcare provider, be on the look-out for people with who recently traveled from China and fever and respiratory symptoms.
  - If you are a healthcare provider caring for a **COVID-19** patient or a public health responder, please take care of yourself and follow recommended infection control procedures.
  - For people who have had close contact with someone with **COVID-19** who develop symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your exposure to a **COVID-19** patient.
  - For people who are ill with **COVID-19**, please follow CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others. This guidance in on the CDC website.

### **LABORATORY ISSUES**

#### **Background:**

- CDC has developed a real time Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (rRT-PCR) test to diagnose COVID-19 in respiratory samples from clinical specimens.
- On January 24, CDC publicly posted the assay protocol for this test.
- CDC submitted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) package to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on February 3 for its test.
- FDA approved the Emergency Use Authorization on February 4.

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Key Points continued

- On February 5, CDC test kits were available for ordering by domestic and international partners through the agency's International Reagent Resource.
- Upon arrival at public health laboratories, it is necessary to verify the assay before beginning to test specimens from persons under investigation (PUIs).
- A number of laboratories have reported issues when conducting initial verification of the test.
- Specifically, some laboratories are reporting sporadic reactivity in the negative controls of one of the three components of the assay.
- This can cause an inconclusive test result.
- CDC believes that this is a manufacturing issue.
- On February 9, APHL sent a message to their member laboratories, notifying them of this issue; CDC sent the message to the FDA and to Department of Defense colleagues on the same day.
- CDC is remanufacturing the reagents that are not performing consistently. This process is being expedited.
- At this time:
  - Laboratories that have verified the assay are able to test.
  - Laboratories that have encountered problems verifying the assay should not continue testing.
- FDA has concurred with this action plan.
- Routine quality control (QC) measures aim to identify these types of issues. It is unclear why QC did not detect this issue. CDC is looking into this situation further.
- The verification process is another critical QC step and, in this case, detected the problem.

## TRAVEL

- On January 31, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a [public health emergency](#) for the United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to this novel coronavirus.
- Also on January 31, the President of the United States issued a "[Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons who Pose a Risk of Transmitting 2019 Novel Coronavirus.](#)"
  - Foreign nationals who have visited China in the past 14 days may not enter the United States.
  - Special precautions are required of U.S. citizens, immediate family members of U.S. citizens, and legal permanent residents entering the United States who have been in China during the past 14 days, including up to a 14-day quarantine.
- All American citizens and exempted persons coming from China will be directed to ("**funneled to**") one of 11 U.S. airports.
  - American citizens and exempted persons who have been in Hubei province in the previous 14 days will have an additional health assessment (screened for fever, cough, or difficulty breathing).
    - If symptomatic, American citizens and exempted persons will be transferred for further medical evaluation. (They will not be able to complete their itinerary.)

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Key Points continued

- If asymptomatic, American citizens and exempted persons will be subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine at or near that location. (They will not be able to complete their itinerary.)
- American citizens and exempted persons who have been in other parts of mainland China (outside of Hubei Province) in the previous 14 days will have an additional health assessment (screened for fever, cough, or difficulty breathing).
  - If symptomatic, American citizens and exempted persons will be transferred for medical evaluation. (They will not be able to complete their itinerary at that time.)
  - If asymptomatic, American citizens and exempted persons will be allowed to reach their final destination and, after arrival, will be monitored under self-quarantine for 14 days.
- CDC is working with public health partners to support the implementation of the travel policies detailed in the presidential proclamation (above).
- On February 3, CDC issued "[Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential 2019 Novel Coronavirus Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)" to provide US public health authorities and other partners with a framework for assessing and managing risk of potential exposures to **SARS-CoV-2** and implementing public health actions based on a person's risk level and clinical presentation.
- The **proclamation** became effective beginning 5 p.m. EST, February 2.

### **Repatriated Flights & Quarantine Orders**

- CDC supported the Department of State in the safe and expedient ordered departure of US citizens and residents from Wuhan, China, on five chartered flights.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary, under statutory authority, issued federal quarantine orders to all the passengers (891 people) entering the United States on these planes.
- The quarantine period is for 14 days, starting from the day the passengers left Wuhan, China.
- The quarantine is a precautionary and preventive step to maximize the containment of the virus in the interest of the health of the American public.
- This quarantine order also will protect the health of the repatriated persons, their families, and their communities.
- Medical staff will monitor the health of each traveler, including temperature checks and observation for respiratory symptoms.
- CDC will work with the state and local public health departments to transport any passenger exhibiting symptoms to a hospital for further evaluation.
- At the end of the 14-day period, people who have not developed symptoms will be free to leave.

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Key Points continued

- On February 12, 195 people from the first chartered flight were discharged from quarantine.

For more information please visit the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak Page at: [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19).