

Risk Alert



Ebola Virus Disease – Outbreak in West Africa including Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

Introduction

Ebola virus disease is a viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF). VHFs are a group of illnesses that are caused by several distinct families of viruses. The natural reservoir for Ebola virus is not known, but it has been found in animals including non-human primates and bats.

Following an incubation period of four to 16 days (range two to 21 days) illness presents with the sudden onset of fever, headache, joint and muscle aches and weakness. As the infection progresses, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, shortness of breath, confusion and haemorrhage can occur. This can lead to multi-organ failure, shock and death.

Most human infections result from direct contact with bodily fluids or secretions from an infected human. The highest risks of infection are associated with caring for infected patients, particularly in hospital settings. Ebola has also been reported following contact with the tissues of infected animals.

Affected areas

Since the beginning of 2014 a new outbreak of the disease has been progressing. Cases and deaths

attributable to Ebola virus disease outbreak continue to be reported from new and some previously affected areas within Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. (see map fig1.)

Risk and Precautions

Ebola virus disease is a severe, often fatal illness, with a case fatality rate of up to 90%. It is one of the world's most virulent diseases. Severely ill patients require intensive supportive care. During an outbreak, those at higher risk of infection are health workers, family members of victims, and others in close contact with sick people and deceased patients.

The risk to most travellers to affected countries in West Africa, including seafarers, is still considered to be low. In addition to the risks associated with patient care, there are high risks of infection associated with unprotected exposure to contaminated bodily fluids, unsafe sexual activity and unsafe medical procedures, including exposure to contaminated medical devices, such as needles and syringes.

It is recommended that the following precautions are taken by travellers to areas with on-going cases:

- Avoid contact with symptomatic patients and their bodily fluids
- Avoid contact with corpses and/or bodily fluids from deceased patients
- Avoid close contact with live or dead wild animals
- Avoid consumption of "bush meat"
- Wash and peel fruits and vegetables before consumption
- Follow strict hand washing routines.

Crew members on ships calling at ports in the affected areas may wish to consider the avoidance of handshakes or physical contact with people from shore and choose to consider implementing disinfection stations for all visitors and crew. Access on board can be limited to essential visitors only and the prohibition of shore leave in areas affected by the outbreak will significantly reduce the risk of infection.

All persons who have been potentially exposed to Ebola virus should seek medical attention immediately should they experience



any symptoms consistent with Ebola within the first 21 days.

Those who are providing medical care or are involved in the evaluation of an outbreak should observe strict barrier precautions.

Members with vessels calling at ports in the countries affected by the outbreak are advised to contact either the Club's local correspondents for advice about the current situation, or their usual contact at the Managers' London representatives.

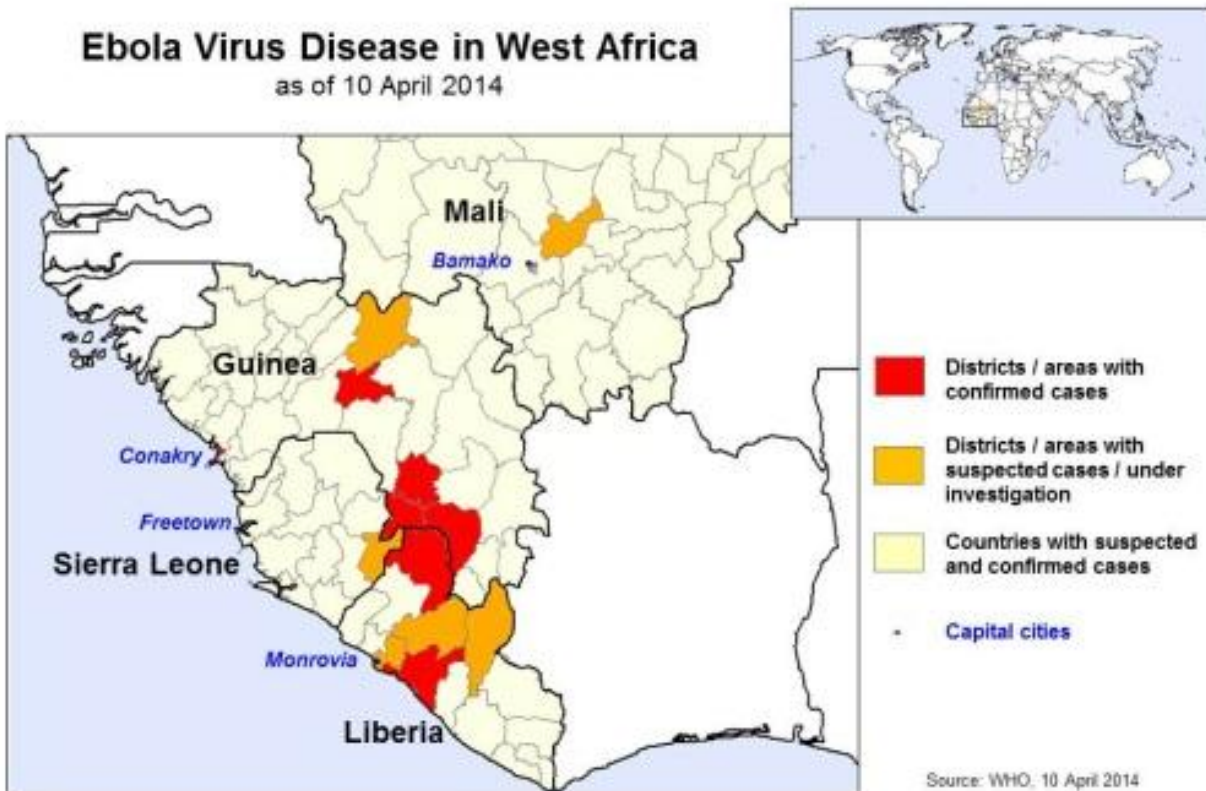
For further details the World Health Organisations (WHO) web site may be accessed at the following link;

http://www.who.int/csr/don/2014_06_24 Ebola/en/

For further information on this or other Loss Prevention topics please contact the Loss Prevention Department, Steamship Insurance Management Services Ltd.

Tel: +44 20 7247 5490
Email: loss.prevention@simsl.com

Fig1.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.
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