

Now more than 140 swine flu cases in US

May 1 2009, By ERICA WERNER , Associated Press Writer



President Barack Obama meets with members of this cabinet including, from left, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, Friday, May 1, 2009. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

(AP) -- President Barack Obama voiced hope Friday that the swine flu virus will run its course "like ordinary flus" as the government reported more than two dozen new cases and Continental Airlines curtailed flights into more heavily ravaged Mexico.

"I'm optimistic that we're going to be able to manage this effectively," Obama told reporters as got an update from his Cabinet on the federal response to the [health emergency](#). At the same time, he emphasized that the federal establishment is preparing as if the worst is still to come so it won't get caught flat-footed.

Obama's fresh take on the flu scare - more intense in neighboring Mexico than in the United States but also present in some measure around the globe - came as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the virus has been confirmed in eight more states.

Confirmed cases have risen from 109 to 141, the CDC said, and it said the flu now is in 19 states, up from 11. Separately a few states reported slightly higher numbers.

Obama said it wasn't clear whether the flu would be more severe than others before it, and he said the swine flu is a cause for special concern because it is new strain and people have not developed an immunity to it.

Government agencies are preparing in case the flu comes back in a more virulent form during the traditional flu season, the president said, talking of an overarching effort to help schools and businesses while also responding to pleas for help from other countries.

Meanwhile, Houston-based Continental became the first U.S. carrier to curtail service. Many travelers have become increasingly concerned about going to Mexico, though authorities there said new cases and the death rate was leveling off. Continental has over 500 flights a week between the United States and Mexico.

[Mexico City](#) Mayor Marcelo Ebrard said Friday that no new deaths from swine flu were reported overnight for the first time since the emergency was declared a week ago. Mexico has confirmed 300 swine flu cases but stopped reporting suspected infections when the number approached 2,500. There have been a dozen confirmed deaths there from the flu, although reports have indicated that roughly 120 may have died from it.

Of the curtailment of airline flights, Continental's chairman and chief executive, Larry Kellner, said that "we were already experiencing soft

market conditions due to the economy, and now our Mexico routes in particular have extra weakness."

No other U.S. carriers had announced capacity cuts. "We are hearing that there is a softening of demand to and from Mexico," said David Castelveter, a spokesman for the Air Transportation Association, which represents airlines.

Clinics and hospital emergency rooms in New York, California and some other states are seeing a surge in patients with coughs and sneezes that might have been ignored before the outbreak.

The outbreak even touched the White House, which disclosed that an aide to Energy Secretary Steven Chu apparently got sick helping arrange Obama's recent trip to Mexico but that the aide did not fly on Air Force One and never posed a risk to the president.

The aide, Marc Griswold, a former Secret Service agent who was doing advance work for Chu, told The Associated Press when reached at his Department of Energy office Friday that he was feeling better.

He declined to elaborate beyond comments in the Washington Post Friday.

"We're not the Typhoid Mary family, for goodness sake," he told the Post. "We've been told that we're not contagious. We're already past the seven-day mark for that."

So far U.S. cases are mostly fairly mild and, officials said, most so far haven't required a doctor's care.

Still, the U.S. is taking extraordinary precautions - including shipping millions of doses of anti-flu drugs to states in case they're needed.

Late Thursday the Department of Health and Human Services announced it was buying 13 million new treatment courses of antiviral drugs to replenish and grow the U.S. strategic stockpile. Eleven million treatment courses have been sent to states - 25 percent of each state's allotment - and the U.S. also announced plans Thursday to send 400,000 treatment courses to Mexico.

The World Health Organization is warning of an imminent pandemic because scientists cannot predict what a brand-new virus might do. A key concern is whether this spring outbreak will surge again in the fall.

The CDC added the following states Friday to its list of confirmed cases: New Jersey with five cases, Delaware with four, Illinois with three, Colorado and Virginia with two, and Minnesota and Nebraska each with one. The CDC reported one case in Kentucky and none in Georgia, while Georgia officials report one case there - that of a sickened Kentucky resident who traveled to Georgia.

CDC previously had confirmed cases in New York, Texas, California, South Carolina, Kansas, Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, Arizona, Michigan and Nevada.

On the Net:

Health and Human Services Department [swine flu](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) site:
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

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