

Britain feels ready after Ebola outbreak test

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Britain is ready to cope with an Ebola outbreak, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt declared Saturday, following a nationwide exercise to test the country's readiness.

The eight-hour exercise featured actors pretending to have Ebola plus doctors, nurses and the ambulance service treating them around the country.

It was followed by a simulated meeting of the government's emergency committee COBRA, chaired by Hunt.

"This is an extremely useful exercise and I feel doubly reassured that we have robust plans in place in the event that we get an Ebola case in the UK," he said.

"We will evaluate what went well and what we need to improve.

"This exercise is just one small part of our ongoing contingency plans for Ebola."

The Department of Health said it had been planning its response to an Ebola case ever since the outbreak began in west Africa.

"This vitally important exercise gave a very realistic test of how prepared the system is to deal with a case of Ebola," said England's Chief Medical Officer Sally Davies, the government's senior health adviser.

"Today has included a variety of scenarios involving personnel from hospitals, ambulance services and local authorities."

The exercise was ordered by Prime Minister David Cameron.

As part of the [exercise](#), a person collapsed in a shopping centre in Newcastle, northeast England, and was placed in isolation in a nearby hospital, with samples sent to the government's Porton Down science laboratory in southeast England.

After Ebola was diagnosed, the patient was transferred to a London hospital.

In another case, a patient turned up to a walk-in centre in London with flu-like symptoms, having recently returned from west Africa.

The Ebola epidemic has killed over 4,000 people this year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), with Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone the worst hit.

Britain has only treated one case of Ebola on its shores.

William Pooley, a nurse who contracted the virus while working in Sierra Leone, made a full recovery last month after being treated in a London hospital.

But concerns have risen since a Spanish nurse caught Ebola while treating a patient in a Madrid hospital and the WHO has warned that other isolated infections in Europe were "unavoidable".

Britain announced Wednesday it was sending 750 military personnel, a medical ship and three helicopters to Sierra Leone to help fight the spread of Ebola.

It also said Thursday it would start screening travellers coming from Ebola-hit parts of west Africa at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports and on Eurostar trains to the capital from Belgium and France.

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