

Texas tracks 50 exposed to Ebola, 10 'high risk'

October 3 2014, by Linda Jones

Texas health officials were monitoring 50 people for Ebola exposure Friday, 10 of whom are at high risk of the disease after close contact with the first diagnosed US patient.

Meanwhile, leading US health authorities sought to reassure the public that an outbreak of Ebola in the United States was unlikely due to the nation's modern healthcare system.

The 50 were narrowed down from an initial pool of 100 people thought to have come into contact with the sick man.

For the next three weeks they will be checked for fever twice daily, and are currently "doing well," said David Lakey, commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services.

"Most of these individuals are low risk. There are about 10 individuals that are at [high risk](#), so we are watching those individuals very carefully."

The people are [health care workers](#) and those who came in close contact with Thomas Eric Duncan, who traveled from Liberia to Texas in late September and was announced Tuesday as the first diagnosed US case of Ebola.

Anthony Fauci, the head of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told a White House news conference that the US

health care system "would make it extraordinarily unlikely that we would have an outbreak."

He acknowledged "missteps" in the way Dallas handled the situation at first, with the hospital admitting a flaw in [electronic health records](#) left doctors unaware of the patient's travel history to Africa.

Duncan was sent home after initially seeking treatment, and was in the community, showing symptoms and therefore contagious, for four days before he was isolated.

"There were things that did not go the way they should have in Dallas, but there were a lot of things that went right and are going right," Fauci said.

"Contract tracing is now going on, and that is the important thing."

Closely monitored

Duncan's girlfriend and three members of her family have meanwhile been ordered to stay inside in a Dallas apartment under police guard.

A hazardous materials team arrived Friday to remove the sheets and towels Duncan used while he was sick, according to pictures posted online by the Dallas City Hall.

A cleanup team was turned away on Thursday over problems with permits for dangerous waste.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials continue to monitor the [health](#) of the four people in the apartment, but Duncan's girlfriend, Louise, has complained of the quarantine.

"They did not bring food yet," Louise told CNN.

"I'm just hanging in there, depending on God to save our lives."

Louise said she cleaned the apartment with bleach after Duncan's Ebola diagnosis and, when asked if she came into contact with Duncan's fluids, she said she did not think she had.

The family has been ordered to stay in the apartment until October 19, the end of the virus's incubation period.

Potential new case

Meanwhile, concerns mounted elsewhere in the United States about the potential spread of Ebola, which has already killed 3,338 people in West Africa.

A patient with Ebola-like symptoms—which can include fever, vomiting and diarrhea—who recently traveled to Nigeria was hospitalized at Howard University in Washington.

"In an abundance of caution, we have activated the appropriate infection control protocols, including isolating the patient," hospital spokeswoman Kerry-Ann Hamilton told AFP.

A 33-year-old American cameraman for NBC News was diagnosed with Ebola in Liberia on Thursday and was said to be returning to the United States for treatment.

The State Department has helped facilitate the return home of a total of five Americans from West Africa for Ebola treatment, and a sixth with a high risk for Ebola exposure since the outbreak began earlier this year, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

She said the five include the freelance cameraman, Ashoka Mukpo. He is scheduled to arrive in Omaha, Nebraska Monday morning.

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