

Congo health ministry preps for possible Ebola vaccinations

August 6 2018, by Al-Hadji Kudra Maliro

Congo's health ministry is preparing to begin Ebola vaccinations Wednesday in the eastern city of Beni and neighboring Mangina village where the outbreak was announced last week, the ministry said.

The vaccination campaign will target [health](#) care providers, contacts of confirmed Ebola cases and their contacts, said Barthe Ndjoloko Tambwe, director of the Ebola response in Beni. The strategy is the same that was used to contain the previous [outbreak](#) in Congo's Equateur province in which more than 3,300 people were vaccinated.

Congo's health ministry says there are 13 confirmed Ebola cases, including 3 deaths, in the current outbreak.

Congo announced the latest outbreak on Aug. 1 with four confirmed cases, a week after declaring the end to a previous outbreak in the northwest with 33 deaths. It is not clear whether the new outbreak, more than 2,500 kilometers (1,553 miles) away, is related.

The World Health Organization has said it hopes to know as early as Tuesday whether the Ebola strain in this new outbreak is the one for which the vaccine can be used.

Health experts in Beni are setting up "cold chains," a series of measures to keep the vaccines at the optimal temperature of minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 158 degrees Fahrenheit) before they can travel from the capital, Kinshasa, to the Beni region in eastern Congo, which has

unreliable power supplies and hot temperatures, said Tambwe.

WHO had said that 3,000 doses of the vaccine are still in Congo's capital, and that it can access up to 300,000 more on short notice.

The ministry noted 30 probable Ebola cases in the new outbreak and said another 33 suspected cases were under investigation, with laboratory testing underway. Overall 33 people have died, it said.

Ebola is endemic in Congo. This is its tenth outbreak of the virus.

Ebola, first identified in the country in 1976, jumps to humans from animals including bats and monkeys. There is no specific treatment, and the virus can be fatal in up to 90 percent of cases, depending on the strain.

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