

# US orders agents to monitor travelers for Ebola (Update)

8 October 2014, by Alicia A. Caldwell



This undated image provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) shows a flyer given to people arriving in the US. The Homeland Security Department has ordered agents at airports and other ports of entry to observe everyone coming into the United States for potential signs of Ebola infection, officials said Wednesday. They did not provide immediate details or say what specific measures would be taken. (AP Photo/CDC)

Homeland Security agents at airports and other ports of entry have begun observing travelers coming into the United States for potential signs of Ebola infection and handing out fact sheets about the disease, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The official did not provide details as to what

specific additional new measures are being taken.

The Washington Post reported that passengers whose trips originated in West Africa would have their temperatures taken upon arrival at any of five major U.S. airports. Those are John F. Kennedy in New York, Dulles outside Washington, O'Hare in Chicago, Hartsfield-Jackson in Atlanta and Newark Liberty outside New York, the Post said, citing an anonymous federal official.

In Dallas, a Liberian man with Ebola died Wednesday. He had come to Dallas in late September but did not display obvious signs of having the disease when he entered the U.S.

Outside Washington, Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Wednesday that Customs and Border Protection agents are handing out information sheets to travelers with details of what symptoms to look for and directions to call a doctor if they become sick within 21 days—the incubation period for Ebola.

The fact sheet appears to specifically address those travelers arriving from countries affected by the disease.

"You were given this card because you arrived to the United States from a country with Ebola," the fact sheet says. It tells passengers to "please watch your health for the next 21 days" and to "take your temperature every morning and evening, and watch for symptoms of Ebola," listed on the information sheet.



In this Oct. 5, 2014 file photo, hazardous material cleaners disinfectant their personal protective equipment after working in the apartment where Thomas Eric Duncan, the Ebola patient who traveled from Liberia to Dallas, stayed last week, in Dallas. The Homeland Security Department has ordered agents at airports and other ports of entry to observe everyone coming into the United States for potential signs of Ebola infection, officials said Wednesday. Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Customs and Border Protection agents are also handing out factsheets to travelers with details of what symptoms to look for and directions to call a doctor if they become sick within 21 days. (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

Mayorkas said agents would observe all travelers for "general signs of illness" at the points of entry. He spoke at an airport security conference.

The White House, in a fact sheet this week, generally described Customs and Border Protection practices of being alert to passengers with obvious illnesses, but did not specify exactly what would be done to find potentially infected passengers.

The Obama administration has wrestled in recent weeks with what it can do, since arriving passengers may not be symptomatic when they arrive.

Mayorkas said the department was aware of those issues and is "taking a layered approach."

Ebola has killed more than 3,400 people in West Africa and infected at least twice that many, according to the World Health Organization. The

virus has taken an especially devastating toll on health care workers, sickening or killing more than 370 of them in the hardest-hit countries of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone—places that already were short on doctors and nurses before Ebola.

President Barack Obama has said the U.S. will be "working on protocols to do additional passenger screening both at the source and here in the United States." Extra screening measures are in effect at airports in the outbreak zones. Departing passengers are screened for fever and asked if they have had contact with anyone infected with the disease.

Dr. Tom Frieden of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said this week that officials are looking at all options "to see what we can do to increase safety of all Americans."

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