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GUIDELINES FOR FLIGHT CREW, AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES UNITS AND PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (PHDs) FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CASES OF A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ON BOARD AN AIRCRAFT

A communicable disease is suspected when an infected person has a fever associated with one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- Appear unwell
- Persistent coughing
- Impaired breathing
- Persistent diarrhoea
- Persistent vomiting
- Skin rash
- Bruising or bleeding without any obvious injury

Ebola

Ebola is a deadly disease which usually appears two (2) to twenty-one (21) days following exposure to the virus. Ebola can be transmitted by direct contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected or deceased person.

The current Ebola disease is believed to have begun in Guinea and spread to Sierra Leone, Liberia and the State of Lagos/Nigeria in West Africa. Persons who have left these countries for more than twenty-one (21) days should not be considered to have the disease.

The symptoms of Ebola virus disease (EVD) include but are not limited to: sudden onset of fever, headache, intense tiredness, weakness, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, and

unexplained bleeding. Only persons who are displaying symptoms are considered infectious, meaning that they can transmit the disease. Persons should only be considered at risk if they have had contact or exposure to someone symptomatic for EVD or someone who has died from EVD.

EVD currently poses a substantial threat to the global population because it can be easily transmitted between humans across borders.

The aviation industry will undoubtedly be negatively affected as passengers may avoid flying to areas where there is a perceived increased risk of the disease. Air travel can undeniably increase the rate of spread of the virus, thereby decreasing the time countries have to operationalize intervention strategies. It may be difficult to halt the spread of this disease, but adequate and timely preparation will lessen the impact of disease entry into countries.

The Government of Jamaica, through the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), is closely monitoring the spread of the virus and instituting measures to ensure that suspected cases are identified and contained, thus limiting potentially adverse effects on the country.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), has mandated member States to establish a national plan to respond to diseases which pose a serious threat to public health.

In order to address the Ebola threat, and in accordance with the Jamaica Civil Aviation Regulations (JCARs 23.091), the Ministry of Health, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), airport operators, the Jamaica Defence Force and other related emergency response agencies have established a national Aviation plan that will ensure the seamless implementation of activities that will mitigate against the spread of EVD.

- (1) The national aviation plan is in keeping with the International Civil Aviation Organization guidelines concerning the management of communicable diseases posing serious health risks.
- (2) Airport Operators shall establish their airport emergency plans for public health emergencies of international concern.

As per ICAO requirements, and in order to mitigate the effects of an outbreak, **the pilot in command of an aircraft is required to notify air traffic control of suspected cases of the**

EVD on board the aircraft, so that the public health authority at the destination can be advised appropriately and in a timely manner.

- (1) As soon as the pilot-in-command (PIC) becomes aware that there is a traveller on board who is suffering from a suspected case of EVD disease, the PIC shall notify immediately the air traffic services unit with which he/she is currently communicating, with a request that a message be forwarded to the destination aerodrome control tower.
- (2) The message should include the information listed below (PANS-ATM Doc 4444, Chapter 16):
 - (a) the aircraft's call sign,
 - (b) aerodrome of departure,
 - (c) destination aerodrome,
 - (d) estimated time of arrival,
 - (e) number of persons on board,
 - (f) number of suspected cases,
 - (g) and the words "communicable disease".

For example

"(ATS unit), (call sign) REQUEST THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION BE FORWARDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO (destination aerodrome) TOWER. ADVISE READY TO COPY"

or

"(call sign), ADVISE (destination aerodrome) TOWER THAT (call sign), DEPARTURE AERODROME (departure aerodrome) ESTIMATING (destination aerodrome) AT (time) PERSONS ON BOARD (number) REPORTING (number) CASE(S) OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ON BOARD"

The following office (s) must be contacted immediately:

International Health Regulations Focal point (IHR)

1 876 822 2222

Director, Emergency, Disaster Management and Special Services (EDMSS)	1 876 317 9980
MOH National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC)	1 876 633 7433
Public Health Department, Norman Manley Airport	876 924-8316
Port Health/Quarantine Office, Sangster International Airport	876 952-2013
Public Health Department, Ian Fleming International Airport	876 975-3734/ 876 975-3101

It is envisaged that once the Public Health Department (PHD) at the respective airport is in receipt of the relevant information, it will contact the airline agent and establish, through the aircraft operating agency (not ATC), communicating with the aircraft concerned. Depending on the communication facilities available to the agency, the PHD may not be able to communicate with the aircraft until it is closer to its destination.

However, it is through the aircraft operating agency that details of the event, in addition to those transmitted by the air traffic services unit to the destination control tower, can be requested by the PHD and communicated.

Apart from the initial notification to the air traffic services unit by the PIC whilst en-route, ATC communication channels should not be used.

Further information may be obtained by visiting the Ministry of Health's website at:

www.moh.gov.jm