



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Governor, State Health Officer and Alabama Hospital Association discuss state's Ebola preparedness activities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Robert Bentley and State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson held a news conference Wednesday to provide an update on preparedness and planning activities in response to potential cases of Ebola in the state.

Ebola, also known as Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), is not spread through air, by water, or in general, by food. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who are at highest risk of contracting Ebola include those who travel to countries with active Ebola outbreaks and are health care workers or family and friends of an Ebola patient in direct contact with the person who was infected with the virus.

"As with all types of emergencies, preparedness is essential to an effective response," Gov. Bentley said. "We are making plans to protect the safety and well-being of all Alabamians through public health and our health care providers. Ebola is a very dangerous infectious disease, and we are committed to providing local communities the assistance they need to respond quickly if the need arises."

The Alabama Department of Public Health remains in constant contact with the CDC to ensure that it has the most updated information on how to prevent and respond to Ebola should there be a case in our state. In addition, Public Health has taken several steps to provide local communities, partner organizations and health care providers with information and education that they can use to prepare for response to Ebola.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "We feel at this time that we are taking the necessary steps to educate ourselves on the latest medical updates, provide useful prevention information to the public, and prepare our staff and partners to respond. These are the actions we will continue to take in the future."

Alabama's hospitals have worked extensively with ADPH for years to better prepare hospitals and health care workers to care for patients with infectious diseases.

"Alabama's hospitals take very seriously any new threat to patients, their families and to health care workers, particularly the latest threat from Ebola," said J. Michael Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association. "However, it's important to note that hospitals prepare for the

unknown every day and are currently updating their infectious disease plans as needed with the latest information from the Alabama Department of Public Health and the CDC.”

Horsley added , “Through this partnership, and funding made available from the Federal Hospital Preparedness Program, we’ve been able to enhance hospital isolation capability and provide personal protective equipment for employees and to train employees on how to handle such outbreaks. “We’ve always worked hand in glove with Public Health and other state partners in preventing the spread of infection.”

Horsley said, “The good news is that this work is paying off. In a recent CDC report, Alabama was one of only two states in the nation to perform better than all other states in infection prevention in three of the four reporting categories, so we have a strong base to build upon.”

A toolkit on Ebola for Alabama health care providers and the community is available online. This same information has also been provided to Alabama hospitals. The public can visit adph.org/ebola for the latest information about Ebola.