
STATEMENT

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Ministry of Health

Health Minister's update on Ebola preparedness

VICTORIA – Health Minister Terry Lake has issued the following update on the health-care system's preparation for the low likelihood of a case of Ebola in B.C.:

“Our Ebola Preparedness task force has been meeting regularly, and has been reviewing B.C.'s protocols to respond to the unlikely occurrence of a case of Ebola arriving in the province.

“The task force, in consultation with the health authorities, have designated the following sites as regional centres to assess those at higher risk of having Ebola and to treat confirmed Ebola cases:

- Lower Mainland: Surrey Memorial Hospital
- Island Health: Royal Jubilee Hospital
- Interior Health: Kelowna General Hospital
- Northern Health: University Hospital of Northern B.C.
- Pediatric Clients: BC Children's Hospital

“These sites will be the focus of training for staff on the protocols for health-care workers who would be engaged with a confirmed patient or a patient under investigation. Emergency room and front-line staff at all other health-care facilities are also being trained to receive, isolate and triage any symptomatic individual of interest with risk of exposure to Ebola.

“As part of the task force's review of the most effective measures to protect health-care workers and the public, B.C. infection control experts are revising their guidelines for personal protective equipment (PPEs) for health-care staff assessing and treating those under investigation for or those with confirmed Ebola.

“These updated guidelines have been developed with advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada's national expert group. Staff will be fully covered, with no skin showing – equipment will include full body suits, long, fully impervious gowns, separate level 4 hoods, face shields, surgical masks and N95 respirator masks. Protocols will also include a buddy system for staff – where one staff member will observe the other donning and doffing protective equipment to ensure there is no risk for self-contamination. Staff will be trained in these protocols.

“As well, the task force has organized weekly stakeholder engagement teleconferences with affected regulatory colleges – including the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Registered Nurses of BC and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of BC, bargaining associations – including the BCNU, HSA and HEU, the Doctors of BC, the BC Professional Firefighters Association and the Fire Chiefs Association of B.C., to provide information and answer questions regarding our Ebola preparedness.

“B.C. officials continue to work with their colleagues across the country and with the Public Health Agency of Canada to ensure consistent development and use of best practices.

“I want to thank everyone who is working to ensure B.C. is prepared in the unlikely appearance of a case of Ebola. The risk remains very low, but our vigilance remains high.”

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