



Ebola: Guidance to Police Forces on Use of Personal Protective Equipment

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurring in West Africa, with widespread transmission continuing in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is the largest ever known outbreak of this disease prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in August 2014. Cases have also occurred in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, the UK and the US.*

There remains an expectation that a handful of further cases may occur in the UK in the coming months. Thus, although the risk of imported cases remains low, it is possible that further persons infected in Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK while incubating the disease (the incubation period is 2-21 days) and develop symptoms after their return.

While a fever in persons coming from Ebola transmission areas is more likely to be caused by a common infection, such as malaria or typhoid fever, police staff should remain vigilant for those who have come from areas affected by this outbreak and subsequently become unwell.

Screening for symptoms of the disease has been introduced at airports in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone for exiting passengers. For incoming passengers from affected areas screening has been introduced at the main airports in England, the Eurostar terminal at St Pancras and seaports in response to shipping movements. Remote (over the phone) screening arrangements are in place for people arriving from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone at other ports of entry in England.

The above measures are designed to further reduce the already limited risk of importation of cases to this country.

* For further information about the Ebola outbreak, please see
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ebola-virus-government-response>.

Although unlikely, it is not impossible that police officers may come into contact with people recently returned from one of the countries affected by the outbreak. This factsheet provides advice on the control measures and, where required, the PPE to be worn when interacting with people with symptoms of possible infection with Ebola who also have a history of recent travel to the UK from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone.

In all cases officers and staff should take appropriate precautions to protect themselves as they would for any infectious disease. Where appropriate, in an operational setting, they should conduct a risk assessment (in the Police this would be a “dynamic risk assessment”) and adopt, appropriate precautions for infection control. In the majority of policing activities it is unlikely that police officers will require any additional PPE for normal policing activities.

Police officers should not be performing clinical assessments of any possible cases. If concerned that someone you are managing may be at risk of Ebola infection, TALK – DON’T TOUCH – call the local health protection unit (<https://www.gov.uk/contacts-phe-regions-and-local-centres>).**

This sheet provides additional guidance on control measures for policing activities.

Control measures	
Policing activities with no physical contact (eg interviewing people)	No additional PPE required
Policing activities with physical contact (eg arrest/restraint) No symptoms	Standard universal precautions apply: Hand hygiene, double gloves
Policing activities with physical contact (eg arrest /restraint) Suspect case only symptom: High temperature/fever	Standard universal precautions apply: Hand hygiene, double gloves
Policing activity with physical contact (suspect case symptoms might include: fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding). Occurrence of this scenario is considered remote, but could occur in custody* if a detainee becomes unwell and requires first aid or support while awaiting medical attention or evacuation	Standard precautions apply: Hand hygiene, double gloves, plastic apron PLUS Fluid repellent surgical facemask**, eye protection

* Additional PHE guidance for custody is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-virus-disease-police-custody-suites-risk-assessment>

** There is no requirement for an FFP3 mask but if available can be used in lieu of a surgical mask. In such circumstances fitting of the FFP3 mask is NOT required as Ebola is not transmitted through the air. The mask is simply used to prevent splash incidents by protecting the nose and mouth

Police forces should review and risk assess any activity not covered by the general precautions in the table above. If required, advice on control measures can be obtained from local health protection units.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with [Ebola virus disease: current risk assessment at police custody suites](#) for action to be taken when dealing with suspect Ebola cases. See also [Ebola virus disease: epidemiological update](#) and [WHO website](#).

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