

Ebola Questions and Answers for Airline Customer Service Representatives

These questions and answers address potential Ebola exposure for airline customer service representatives who assist passengers in U.S. airports. This guidance is based on current knowledge of Ebola. Check the following CDC Ebola website for the most current airport-related information:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/ebola-outbreak-communication-resources>

How is Ebola spread?

Ebola is spread by direct contact with blood or other body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola. Direct contact can happen through broken skin or through your eyes, nose, or mouth, either by touch, droplet splashes, or sharp items like needles. Body fluids include urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen. A person must have symptoms and close contact with others to spread Ebola.

As an airline customer service representative, what is my risk of exposure to Ebola?

Your chances of being exposed to Ebola are low when you help passengers in the airport. Public health workers will screen passengers for Ebola symptoms as they leave African countries with an Ebola outbreak as well as when they arrive in the United States. Passengers who are screened and have symptoms of Ebola will not be allowed to enter public areas of the airport. However, a few people may develop symptoms after they pass through screening. Even if someone does develop symptoms after passing screening, you would need to have close contact or touch their blood or body fluids to have a chance of catching Ebola.

What can I do to avoid Ebola or other potentially infectious materials?

Practice careful hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoid contact with blood and other body fluids. Unless you have been trained and provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), do not handle things that may have come in contact with a person's blood or other body fluids. These can include clothes, used tissues, waste bags, bedding, needles, and medical equipment. Report suspect contaminated areas or items to your supervisor. Your employer should have a plan and provide you with the right training and PPE to avoid contact with suspected body fluids.

What should I do if I think that an area or surface is contaminated with Ebola? Should I try to clean the area?

Unless you have been specifically trained and provided appropriate PPE for cleaning suspect Ebola-contaminated areas, you should NOT try to clean the area.

- You should immediately prevent access to the area by the public and other workers.
- Then alert others in the area, and notify your supervisor or other personnel designated to respond to these situations.

Employers are responsible for ensuring that workers are protected from exposure to Ebola and that workers are not exposed to harmful levels of chemicals used for cleaning and disinfection. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, including those for bloodborne pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030), establish requirements for protecting workers and should be followed by employers.

What should my employer do to make sure I know about Ebola, my chances of being exposed, and what to do in situations where areas or surfaces are contaminated with Ebola?

Your employer should have an Ebola health and safety plan to protect you by:

- Having a designated person who is responsible for responding to Ebola concerns at the airport. You should know who this person is and how to contact him or her.
- Explaining any specific public health procedures at this airport to monitor people who have traveled from Ebola-affected areas.
- Providing you with the right information about Ebola, how it is spread, and your risk of exposure.
- Providing you training on good hand-washing practices and other routine infection control precautions, such as the use of gloves, if necessary. This will help prevent the spread of many diseases, including Ebola.
- Providing you with appropriate PPE when necessary and providing training on using the PPE.
- Showing you where you can access soap and clean running water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol.

Where can I get more information?

Stay informed. Talk to your employer, supervisor, union representative, or airport personnel who are responsible for responding to Ebola concerns. See these sources for more information on worker exposures to Ebola:

- NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic page for Ebola: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ebola/>
- CDC Ebola website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>
- CDC Ebola Guidance for Airlines: <http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/air/managing-sick-travelers/ebola-guidance-airlines.html>
- OSHA Ebola website: <http://www.osha.gov/ebola/>
- OSHA Fact Sheet, "Cleaning and Decontamination of Ebola on Surfaces": https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_FS-3756.pdf
- OSHA Fact Sheet on the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard: https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_BloodborneFacts/bbfact01.pdf
- CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | Website: www.cdc.gov/info