

PUBLIC HEALTH

California senators urge hospital preparedness for Ebola

By [Susan Abram](#), Los Angeles Daily News

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California's senators called on hospitals across the Golden State to take every measure possible to ensure that staff are fully trained and prepared to screen, diagnose and treat any potential [Ebola](#) patients.

In a [co-written letter](#) directed to the California Hospital Association and the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems, U.S. Sens. Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein urged the organizations to ensure preparedness.

“The purpose of this letter is to make sure that California hospitals are 100 percent up to date to keep Californians safe from the threat of this deadly disease,” the senators wrote in a letter released Friday.

Their letter comes a few days after a Texas hospital mistakenly released a Liberian man who had all the symptoms of the deadly disease that has plagued West Africa. He was readmitted, but his delayed care placed an estimated 100 people in his Dallas apartment room, building and neighborhood at risk.

“All appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that this type of dangerous lapse does not happen again,” the senators wrote in their letter.

They asked the associations to respond within a week.

Feinstein and Boxer said their goal was to make sure all hospitals have received guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Los Angeles County and beyond, all hospitals have ensured they use those guidelines already, said Jennifer Bayer, spokeswoman for the Hospital Association of Southern California.

“Communication is going to be key,” Bayer said. “We don't have direct flights from West Africa, but we are a major hub. We've been in close communication with Los Angeles County

public health. They feel very confident hospitals are ready, and they feel their network is in place.”

While a case of Ebola is possible in Los Angeles County, an outbreak is unlikely, said Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, the Los Angeles County interim health officer.

“Public Health has been actively preparing for a possible case of Ebola in Los Angeles County,” Gunzenhauser said in a statement. “Public Health is confident that the level of precaution required to protect against Ebola is well within the capabilities of all hospitals in Los Angeles County.”

In August, a Sacramento County patient was quickly hospitalized after she was listed as at risk for having the Ebola virus. Her test results came back negative and the quick process was praised by state health director Dr. Ron Chapman.

“The case in Sacramento County demonstrates that the system is working,” Chapman said. “This patient was quickly identified, appropriate infection control procedures were implemented, and public health authorities were notified.”

Still, that may not be enough, said [Dr. Reed Wilson](#), a cardiologist and president of Physician’s Private Practice Advocate Group in Los Angeles. He said the U.S. government’s lack of urgency in border and flight security and West Africa’s inability to properly screen people with fevers places all those protocols and Americans at risk.

“We are relying on the failed governments of West African nations to do the screening of their citizens and travelers,” Wilson said. “We are depending on Third World untrained individuals to be the bulwark for the USA to prevent mass death. This should not bring comfort to the ears of American citizens.”

The Ebola virus has spread quickly across four countries in West Africa since March, killing more than 3,000 people. Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have been most affected.

There is no vaccine or approved cure for the virus and it is often fatal in humans. Health officials emphasize the virus can’t be spread through the air, in food or water, but transmission is possible during direct contact, such as through sweat, broken skin or mucous membranes with a sick person’s blood or urine, saliva, feces, vomit and semen.

Transmission also can occur through needles that have been contaminated with infected body fluids and infected animals, according to the CDC. Symptoms may appear anywhere from two to 21 days after exposure and include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and abnormal bleeding. Ebola is more likely to spread in health care settings where protective barriers such as masks, gowns and gloves have not been used, according to federal health officials.