

FEMA Wave 1 Script 1

Anchor:

An unwelcome headline this morning as New York tries to slow the spread of an influenza pandemic. A cruise ship arrives with sick passengers during an escalating sanitation crisis.

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Good morning, I'm Greg Gist, live from VNN headquarters in New York City. The Atlantic Star Cruise Ship carrying more than 200 passengers sick with the Malta Flu has arrived in New York City this morning. All passengers and crew are being screened by CDC doctors upon their arrival. More on the story is our VNN correspondent, Sophie Lee.

Sophie:

Good morning Greg. I am here at the Manhattan Cruise Terminal where the Atlantic Star has just arrived. The cruise ship returned four days ahead of schedule, after more than 200 passengers and crew began showing symptoms of the Malta Flu, a highly contagious virus that has currently left 3,500 New Yorkers sick. Officials from the NYC's Department of Health have been monitoring the situation and will be actively engaged in the extensive sanitization of the vessel before its next scheduled sailing next week. Though the vessel is being sanitized, the city of New York is also facing a sanitation crisis of its own. Thousands of sanitation workers are currently on strike, refusing to clean the streets unless the city addresses their wage and safety concerns. This is a problem that can quickly escalate into an emergency as the nation is dealing with a global pandemic of the Malta Flu.

Anchor:

Sophie, do we know how the strike will impact the city?

Sophie:

Well Greg, the strike can have enormous repercussions at a time when health officials are attempting to mitigate the spread of the Malta Flu. In New York City, the Department of Sanitation handles nearly 13,000 tons of garbage every day. While a prolonged strike should not exacerbate the spread of the Malta Flu, it is important to remember that good hygiene is fundamental to winning the battle against infectious diseases.

Anchor:

Thank you for that report Sophie. Now for additional information, we turn to Dr. Fred Shaw, Senior Medical Correspondent from the Institute of Pandemic Studies here in New York. Hello Dr. Shaw. Thank you for joining us. So what

should we know about this virus, the Malta Flu?

Dr. Shaw:

Thank you Greg. Well, the Malta Flu is a variant of the H3N2 virus that originated from poultry farms across Malta. The first US case was diagnosed on August 15, 2014. Currently, a total of 74 countries are affected by this strain, and in the United States 18,000 cases have so far been reported.

Anchor:

Can you tell me more about the Malta Flu? How is this virus spread?

Dr. Shaw:

Well we know that it's an airborne respiratory disease, meaning that its spread through means such as coughing, sneezing, or close personal contact.

Anchor:

You mentioned infected poultry. Is there a chance that the passengers consumed infected poultry? Should we avoid eating poultry and eggs? Can an infected animal transmit this virus to humans?

Dr. Shaw:

In the US, there has been no evidence of disease in any of our poultry and poultry related products. The federal government has increased their capabilities for surveillance on all poultry and egg producing states. The only known cases in the US were transmitted through human to human close contact. The passengers most likely were infected due to the close proximity of being on a cruise ship.

Anchor:

Is there a vaccine for this virus?

Dr. Shaw:

The CDC has been working to develop one. Initial testing shows that the virus may be susceptible to treatment from Tami-flu or Relenza. However, there is no FDA-approved vaccine currently available. The CDC has provided guidelines on what people can do to prevent the Malta Flu.

Practice careful hygiene

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw your tissue in the trash after use.

Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Seek medical care immediately if you develop a fever greater than 101.5 degrees and have additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain.

Limit your contact with other people when you travel to the doctor; avoid public transportation. Do not travel anywhere except to doctor's office or hospital. The key is prevention.

Anchor:

Thank you Dr. Shaw.

I am Greg Gist, from VNN New York, we thank you for watching.