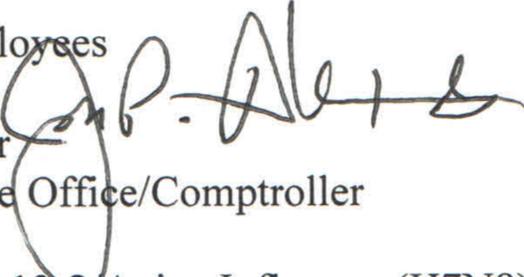




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Finance Office

April 17, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Employees

FROM: Jon P. Alexander 
Director, Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 13-2/Avian Influenza (H7N9)
Employees traveling to China & Southeast Asia

The following information was compiled by the Office of the Secretary, Office of Human Resources Management, Office of Occupational Safety and Health (OOSH), Department of Commerce (DOC).

On April 1, 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) first reported three human infections with a new influenza A (H7N9), a type of flu usually seen in birds, in China. To date, there have been a total of 24 cases with seven deaths. At this time, no cases of H7N9 outside of China have been reported. The new H7N9 virus has not been detected in people or birds in the United States.

This new H7N9 virus is an avian (bird) influenza (flu) virus. Human infections with avian influenza (AI, or "bird flu") are rare but have occurred in the past, most commonly after exposure to infected poultry. However, this is the first time that this bird flu subtype (H7N9) has been found in people. This virus is very different from other H7N9 viruses previously found in birds.

To date, no human-to-human transmission has been reported and no link has been found between the laboratory-confirmed cases. Individuals in close contact with the infected were tested and the results have all been negative. This is a "novel" (non-human) virus and therefore has the potential to cause a pandemic if it were to change to become easily and sustainably spread from person-to-person. So far, this virus has not been determined to have that capability.

However, influenza viruses constantly change and it's possible this virus could gain that ability. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) takes routine preparedness actions whenever a new virus with pandemic potential is identified, including developing a candidate vaccine virus to make a vaccine if it were to be needed. There is no licensed H7 vaccine available at this time.

As the Chinese authorities continue to report new cases of the H7N9 in Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, U.S. citizens in China are advised to stay informed with the latest medical

guidance and practical information. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Infection with the new virus has resulted in severe respiratory illness and, in some cases, death. Chinese health authorities are conducting investigations to learn the source of the infections with this virus and to find other cases. Below is important information to assist you:

Question & Answers to Help Prevent the H7N9 Virus:

How can I protect myself and my family?

Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing. Wash your hands frequently, especially before and after preparing foods and before eating. Thoroughly cook all poultry and poultry products, including eggs. Avoid contact with sick animals and do not go to live animal markets or farms.

What can travelers and Americans living in China do to protect themselves?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent H7N9. At this time, we do not know the source of this virus. CDC is repeating its standard advice to travelers and Americans living in China to follow good hand hygiene and food safety practices and to avoid contact with animals.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the flu virus. Flu is different from the cold and the symptoms come on suddenly. Symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, headache, body aches are some of the symptoms associated with the flu.

What should I do if I have the flu?

Most individuals who get the flu will recover within a few days but some people can develop complications. Individuals with certain lung problems, such as asthma or COPD, diabetes, heart disease, or over the age of 65 are at a greater risk of developing complications.

If you get the flu:

Stay hydrated. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or you are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice. You should stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do and no one else can do for you. You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

Tips on How to Prevent the H7N9 Virus:

Do not touch birds, pigs, or other animals.

Do not touch animals whether they are alive or dead. Avoid live bird or poultry markets. Avoid other markets or farms with animals (wet markets).

Eat food that is fully cooked.

Eat meat and poultry that is fully cooked (not pink) and served hot. Eat hard-cooked eggs (not runny). **Don't** eat or drink dishes that include blood from any animal. **Don't** eat food from street vendors.

Practice hygiene and cleanliness.

Wash your hands often. If soap and water aren't available, clean your hands with hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Try to avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging or sharing eating utensils or cups, with people who are sick.

See a doctor if you become sick during or after travel to China.

See a doctor right away if you become sick with fever, coughing, or shortness of breath. If you get sick while you are still in China, visit the U.S. Department of State website:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1195.html to find a list of local doctors and hospitals. Many foreign hospitals and clinics are accredited by the Joint Commission International. A list of accredited facilities is available at their website (www.jointcommissioninternational.org).

Delay your travel home until after you have recovered or your doctor says it is ok to travel. If you get sick with fever, coughing, or shortness of breath after you return to the United States, be sure to tell your doctor about your recent travel to China.

Contact Information:

Department of State: <http://travel.state.gov>

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in China enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step>. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's website where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for China at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html. For additional information, refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" on the State Department's website.

You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free from within the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow them on Twitter at <https://mobile.twitter.com/travelgov> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/travelgov> and download their free Smart Traveler iPhone App at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smarttraveler/id442693988?mt=8> to have travel information at your fingertips.

The American Citizen Services unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is located at 1038 West Nanjing Road, 8th Floor, Shanghai 200041. They can be reached on (86) (21) 3217-4650. For the American Citizen Services operation hours, please refer to their website: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>.

World Health Organization: www.who.int

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

Watch: Level 1, Practice Usual Precautions Avian Flu (H7N9) in China:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/avian-flu-h7n9-china.htm>

Please direct any questions regarding this advisory to your Line/Staff Office Safety and Environmental Compliance Officer (LECO) or Ann Byar, Chief, Occupational Safety and Health Division, NOAA Safety and Environmental Compliance Office at [\(301\) 943-2267](tel:3019432267) or ann.byar@noaa.gov.