

CORONAVIRUS: CHINA BROADENS REGIONAL LOCKDOWN AFTER MORE DEATHS AND CASES CONFIRMED IN 10 COUNTRIES

KEY FACTS

The outbreak has been caused by a 'coronavirus', thought to have jumped from an unknown animal source to humans in Wuhan's Huanan South China Seafood Market. Wuhan is the capital city of Hubei province in central China. The coronavirus family includes the 'common cold' as well as viruses that cause more serious illnesses, such as SARS that spread from China to more than a dozen countries in 2002-03 and killed about 800 people, and Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), which developed from camels. The virus infects the lungs, and symptoms start with a fever and cough. It can progress to shortness of breath and breathing difficulties leading to pneumonia. It has now spread throughout China and across international borders. To date, there have been 830 confirmed cases and 26 deaths - all but two of the fatalities have been in Wuhan and most have been elderly. There is currently no vaccine or specific treatment. It is advised to avoid gatherings of people, to avoid people who are obviously ill and coughing and to wash your hands with soap and water regularly.

As of the morning of 24th January, the total number of confirmed infections stands at 830, the majority of confirmed cases being in Hubei province - 177 patients are reported to be seriously unwell. There have been 26 confirmed deaths, up from 17 the previous day, with the first confirmed deaths outside Hubei province. There has been one confirmed death in the far north east of the country in Heilongjiang, while the other was in the Hebei provincial health authority, close to Beijing.

Most of the fatalities are elderly people with co-existing medical conditions that would have made them more susceptible to the complications of infection - more than half of the deaths have been in patients over the age of 80. Over 2,000 close contacts have been identified and around 1,400 currently remain under medical observation.

The World Health Organisation, which convened on Wednesday to decide whether to escalate this outbreak to the highest emergency level - a Public Health Emergency of

International Concern (PHEIC) - deferred the decision so that they could gather further information in this fast evolving situation. Late Thursday, the emergency committee has concluded it is "too early" to declare a PHEIC over the coronavirus outbreak.

There have been no new developments since our last update with regard to the 'nature' of the **2019-nCoV virus**, its transmission characteristics, or the original animal source of the coronavirus. However, there have been marked changes in the way the Chinese

government is handling the situation and also in the approach of other nations around the world.

Since the first notification, on New Year's Eve, of 40+ cases of an unusual viral pneumonia of unknown origin in Wuhan, the infection has spread to 13 provinces within China: Beijing, Chongqing City, Guangdong, Henan, Hunan, Jiangxi, Shandong, Shanghai, Sichuan, Tianjin, Zhejiang, Yunnan. The vast majority of cases are still in Hubei province, in which Wuhan is the capital city.

Many thousands of panicked individuals in Hubei province have not been able to access any healthcare because of the vast numbers of people presenting at hugely overstretched hospitals. The Chinese government announced that it will open a new prefabricated 1,000 bed hospital on Monday to cope with Coronavirus patients. Construction began yesterday.

At least 15 healthcare workers are reported to have been infected, but this number appears low and is expected to rise.

The Lunar New Year has undoubtedly added to the spread of the infection. Chinese people are

expected to take an estimated three billion trips during the 40-day spike in travel.

Internationally there have been confirmed cases within the region in Thailand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam, and one confirmed case in the US.

Major tourist attractions in China have announced closures. In Beijing authorities announced that all major Chinese New Year celebrations have been cancelled and The Forbidden City has been shut down. Film companies delayed the release of seven blockbuster movies that were expected to attract big crowds over the Spring Festival holiday; all cinemas in Guangdong province are to close for the holiday period; Cirque du Soleil have suspended their shows in China; and it has been reported that Shanghai Disney is to temporarily close its gates.

Many countries around the world have introduced temperature screening controls at major airports and especially at airports with direct routes from Wuhan. North Korea has closed its borders to all foreign visitors.



COUNTRIES AFFECTED

CHINA

830 confirmed cases, 26 deaths

The Hubei province is the origin of the outbreak and the majority of confirmed cases are in Wuhan, the capital city of the province.

Wuhan, and at least nine other neighbouring cities, including Huanggang, Ezhou, Xiantao and Chibi, have been temporarily 'locked down' by the Chinese government. Transport hubs have been closed and road-blocks are in place to prevent any movement of people in or out of the region. There are now around 33 million people in this locked down area.

A new 1000-bed hospital is being built in Wuhan specifically to deal with the coronavirus outbreak and authorities plan to have it running by Monday. Construction began on Thursday night.

It has been made mandatory for all residents and government workers to wear face masks in the city of Wuhan.

All live animal markets have been ordered to close. Citizens have been advised to avoid crowds and public gatherings.

THAILAND

5 confirmed cases, 0 deaths

Thailand has recorded the highest for any country outside of China.

JAPAN

2 confirmed cases, 0 deaths

The first case is a man in his thirties who travelled directly from Wuhan. The second case is a man in his forties, thought to have transited from Hong Kong.

TAIWAN

1 confirmed case, 0 deaths

SOUTH KOREA

1 confirmed case, 0 deaths

Two cases confirmed - a 35 year old Chinese woman who travelled from Wuhan, and another man in his fifties.

VIETNAM

2 confirmed cases, 0 deaths

Both cases are Chinese citizens.

SINGAPORE

3 confirmed cases, 0 deaths

The first is a 66 year old man. Two more confirmed cases have just been announced.

MACAU

1 confirmed case, 0 deaths

HONG KONG

2 confirmed case, 0 deaths

Two confirmed cases, with a possible 106 suspected cases under observation.

The government has designated two former military barracks as quarantine stations.

The national airline, Cathay Pacific, has said that it will allow cabin crew to wear surgical masks on mainland flights.

UNITED STATES

1 confirmed case, 0 deaths

One confirmed case in Washington State. The man had travelled back into the country from Wuhan but symptoms only developed later prompting him to go to hospital to report his symptoms and his recent travel - he is said to be recovering well.

REST OF THE WORLD...

Saudi Arabia and India, both recently reported to have their first cases, have denied any confirmed cases of the 'Wuhan' coronavirus.

In the UK, 14 people are currently being tested for the virus.

Authorities in Texas are investigating a potential second case, and in Australia at least six people have been quarantined after arriving from China, pending test results for the coronavirus.

ADVICE TO TRAVELLERS

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE TO REDUCE RISK OF INFECTION:

- ↗ Wash your hands regularly with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or with an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing and sneezing and before handling and consuming food.
- ↗ When coughing and sneezing, use disposable tissues and dispose of them carefully and promptly.
- ↗ Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell or who are coughing or sneezing, and avoid sharing personal items.
- ↗ Avoid unprotected contact with wild or domestic farm animals (alive or dead).
- ↗ Thoroughly cook all meat and eggs before consuming.

IF YOU BECOME UNWELL WITHIN 14 DAYS OF RETURNING FROM CHINA:

- ↗ Seek prompt medical advice if you develop symptoms of breathing difficulties, temperature or cough. Call ahead to alert the medical facility, warning them about your recent travel and that you may have been exposed.
- ↗ Try to limit contact with others if you become unwell after travel until you have been assessed by a health professional.
- ↗ When coughing and sneezing, use disposable tissues and dispose of them carefully and promptly
- ↗ Wash your hands regularly with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or with an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing and sneezing and before handling and consuming food.
- ↗ Wearing a surgical face mask consistently may help to prevent spread to others.

ADVICE TO EMPLOYERS

PROVIDE CLEAR INFORMATION

Make sure that all individuals have clear, consistent and regularly updated guidance on: how to recognise symptoms in themselves and others; what precautions to take to prevent exposure; and who to contact if you think you may have symptoms.

RESTRICT TRAVEL

Review all travel plans to the affected region on a regular basis, making use of electronic remote conferencing facilities wherever possible**.

REMOTE WORKING

Make provision, as far as practicable, for travellers and employees within China, and neighbouring countries with confirmed cases, to work from home in order to reduce using public transport and coming into contact with crowds of people.

REVIEW VACCINATION POLICY

Advise employees of the benefits of the 'seasonal flu vaccine' to help prevent infection with 'flu' that may be confused with the new coronavirus- as well as helping to protect them from the flu virus that kills half a million people annually.

****Wuhan and surrounding cities are on lockdown so no travel is permitted to the region, by order of the Chinese government.**

WHAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT 2019-NCOV

1

WHAT SPECIES OF ANIMAL IS THE 'RESERVOIR' (SOURCE) OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS?

It could be a live or a dead animal, almost certainly a bird or a mammal - there are usually bats involved in Coronavirus transmission cycles. It is very hard for scientists to determine the specific animal source, as the Wuhan market that was thought to be at the centre of the outbreak was quickly and thoroughly sanitised, thereby erasing any helpful evidence.

2

HOW IS THE VIRUS TRANSMITTED FROM THE ANIMAL RESERVOIR AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED FROM HUMAN-TO-HUMAN?

It is likely that this respiratory virus is transmitted by coughs and sneezes causing minute aerosol droplets containing the virus to hang in the air, ready to be breathed in by other contacts. How long does the virus remain in the air? Can the virus remain on other objects such as door handles or surfaces, providing another source for transmission?

3

WHAT IS THE 'INCUBATION PERIOD' (TIME FROM INFECTION TO DISPLAYING SYMPTOMS) OF THE INFECTION?

And how long, before symptoms develop, is an individual contagious and capable of spreading the infection to others- is it 2-3 days or is it 7-10 days or any combination in between? There is a difference between being 'infected' and being 'infectious' (capable of transmission).

4

WHAT IS THE MORTALITY RATE OF THE INFECTION?

This is a direct ratio of the number of fatalities compared to the number infected. It is always hard to quantify this figure as many individuals will remain 'sub-clinical', not knowing that they are actually infected, and an unknown number of people will also die without anyone ever knowing that they were actually infected with 2019-nCoV. This ratio will eventually determine the severity of the outbreak.

Published 24th January 2020. Please note that this is an evolving situation and numbers are being updated daily.



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