

WHO to know soon if new Congo Ebola outbreak can use vaccine

3 August 2018

The World Health Organization said Friday it hopes to know as early as Tuesday whether the strain of Ebola in Congo's latest outbreak of the deadly virus is the one for which an experimental vaccine can be used.

The global agency's emergencies director said 3,000 [vaccine](#) doses are still in Congo's capital after being positioned there for an earlier outbreak in the northwest that was declared over last week following 33 deaths. The swift vaccinations of more than 3,300 people helped in containing that outbreak.

Dr. Peter Salama told reporters in Geneva that WHO can mobilize up to 300,000 more doses "at very short notice" for this new outbreak.

Officials said it was not yet clear whether the two Congo outbreaks separated by more than 2,500 kilometers (1,553 miles) are linked. Congo's health ministry on Wednesday announced the four new Ebola cases in Mangina village, about 30 kilometers from Beni city and its more than 230,000 people.

The ministry said 20 people have died from a hemorrhagic fever. Salama said "we expect ... that the overall case count will rise in coming days to weeks based on the trajectory of epidemics at this stage in their development."

Authorities have warned that the new outbreak in northeastern Congo poses a "highly complex" challenge with multiple armed groups active in the mineral-rich region and with Beni city and a well-traveled border with Uganda and Rwanda nearby.

Salama said the "signal event" in this new outbreak was the death of a 65-year-old woman who had been admitted to the hospital in Mangina.

"She died, we believe, on July 25 and she was buried, we believe, in an unsafe burial in terms of

Ebola standards and seven deaths have occurred in her immediate family," Salama said. "So this is what really raised the alarm toward the end of July about the new event—she had fever, vomiting, bloody nose and bloody diarrhea as her final set of symptoms."

Congo has dealt with Ebola for decades and this is its tenth [outbreak](#) of the virus. Ebola, first identified there in 1976, jumps to humans from animals including bats and monkeys. It spreads through contact with bodily fluids of those infected, including the dead.

There is no specific treatment for Ebola, and the virus can be fatal in up to 90 percent of cases, depending on the strain.

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