

# World Health Experts Assess Global Risk of Deadly China Virus



An employee of the virology department of the Charite hospital prepares a test for the new coronavirus in Berlin, Germany, Jan. 21, 2020.

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GENEVA - Experts meeting in emergency session at the World Health Organization will look at the spreading Coronavirus to see whether it constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and decide on recommendations needed to manage it. The WHO has confirmed 440 cases of the disease, including 17 deaths.

Since the new coronavirus was detected in a fish market in Wuhan city, China three weeks ago, the previously unknown virus has moved with frightening speed internally and abroad. Deaths have been reported in China, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

The first case of the disease has been reported in the United States in a man who returned to the West Coast city of Seattle last week from Wuhan. He is hospitalized in good condition, but the appearance of the case has put officials in the U.S. and other countries on heightened alert.



FILE - Medical staff carry a box as they walk at the Jinyintan hospital, where the patients with pneumonia caused by the new strain of coronavirus are being treated, in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, Jan. 10, 2020.

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Many airports are screening travelers from China. U.S. President Donald Trump, who was attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, has told media that he trusts the information coming out of China on coronavirus and that the situation was under control.

Nevertheless, the World Health Organization is urging countries to continue

preparedness measures to protect themselves from the possibilities of a large-scale outbreak.

WHO spokesman Tarek Jasarevic says WHO experts and health officials in China are conducting investigations into the outbreak.

“Much remains to be understood about this novel coronavirus. Not enough is known to draw definitive conclusions about how it is transmitted, clinical features of the disease, its severity, the extent to which it has spread or its source,” he said.

Based on previous experience with respiratory illness, Jasarevic says limited human to human transmission is likely occurring. But he adds, this is not an airborne disease and people have to be in close contact to get infected.

He says WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has convened the emergency meeting because little is known about the coronavirus and expert advice is needed to calm nerves and to know what protective actions are required.

He notes a Public Health Emergency of International Public Concern has been declared only five times by the WHO.

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