

America Biological Safety Association (ABSA) Position Paper on Ebola

The American Biological Safety Association (ABSA) was founded in 1984 to promote biosafety as a scientific discipline and serve the growing needs of biosafety professionals throughout the world. Biosafety professionals are trained in the ability to identify, assess, and control occupational health risks associated with exposure to biohazardous agents and materials and to develop programs to manage these risks. Biosafety professionals come to the profession from many backgrounds such as biology, chemistry, microbiology, occupational health, animal and human medicine, engineering, industrial hygiene, and public health, with many holding advanced degrees. ABSA members work in a variety of environments where there is potential for exposure to biohazardous agents/ materials, such as research, diagnostic, health care, animal, agricultural, and industrial settings. Employers of biosafety professionals include government, private and public sector, academia, and healthcare facilities.

The collective experiences of ABSA members make them uniquely qualified to provide guidance, information, and training to individuals and organizations that are providing support either internationally, in the countries where the Ebola virus is rampant, or in the United States where workers may diagnose, treat, or manage patients with Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

The primary way to stop the spread of EVD is to stop the chain of infection at the source in Africa. The U.S. government must ensure it is prepared to identify, treat, and manage any potentially infected individuals that enter the country. This includes reaching out to all sectors that may have routine or incidental exposure to the virus, from research and diagnostic laboratories to hospitals and healthcare settings, including emergency responders, morgues, and waste management facilities.

ABSA supports the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with regard to screening individuals leaving Ebola affected countries and entering the U.S., as well as tracking and providing monitoring for 21-days based on the "[Guidance for Monitoring and Movement of Persons with Potential Ebola Exposure](#)". ABSA questions the value of placing low risk individuals in quarantine or closing U.S. borders to prevent travel to or from the Ebola affected countries. Such actions would make it more difficult for aid organizations and support groups to provide the people and supplies needed to stop the spread of the disease at its source.

ABSA welcomes the CDC and other federal agencies, state and local public health authorities, hospitals and clinics to contact ABSA (info@absa.org) for input and support on matters of biosafety and biorisk management, including protecting workers, the general public and the environment from exposure to infectious agents. Unlike many other industries dealing with the current Ebola outbreak, biosafety professionals have been addressing these issues since the mid-1900s, when in 1955 [Dr. Arnold G. Wedum](#) initiated

the first Biological Safety Conference at Camp Detrick, Maryland. ABSA's core purpose is dedicated to promoting and expanding biological safety expertise.

ABSA members have significant knowledge in many areas that would directly support containment of EVD via activities such as:

- Providing facility evaluations to help in the selection of isolation rooms to triage, treat, and manage EVD patients;
- Conducting risk assessments that support the selection of personal protective equipment (PPE) and training staff on how to competently wear and remove PPE;
- Developing management practices and SOPs to safely transport, treat, and manage Ebola virus infected patients, materials, and waste; and
- Providing assistance and guidance on the decontamination of waste, equipment, and facilities used to house and treat EVD patients

ABSA supports further funding of the U.S. public health system to strengthen the government's capacity to manage this outbreak and any emerging infectious disease outbreaks. This might include additional funding for public health laboratories and the Laboratory Response Network to ensure they can expeditiously, accurately and safely perform all necessary diagnostic testing.

Finally, ABSA believes the U.S. government should consider additional funding to continue with much needed research on characterizing all aspects of the virus while ensuring the development of vaccines, medical counter-measures, and therapeutics to treat EVD patients.

For additional information, please contact:

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