

## **Responding to Ebola Outbreak Questions: What Hospitality Professionals Need to Know**

We know that some of you are receiving questions from guests, staff, and partners about the Ebola outbreak currently affecting parts of central and east Africa. The below FAQ document will give you accurate, measured information so that you can respond with confidence, and so that your teams can do the same.

At present, there is no travel restriction affecting South Africa or Southern African tourism operations. FEDHASA is monitoring the situation closely through official public health sources, and we will communicate further if developments have a material bearing on South African hospitality operations or member businesses.

### **THE SITUATION — WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

An outbreak of Ebola, caused by the Bundibugyo virus, has been confirmed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), primarily in the Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu provinces in the country's east. Uganda has reported a small number of imported cases linked to travel from the DRC.

On 17 May 2026, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This is a formal designation that triggers coordinated international response. It does not mean pandemic. WHO has explicitly stated that this outbreak does not meet pandemic criteria.

South Africa is not on the Africa CDC's list of affected or high-risk countries. When fielding questions, it is often helpful to gently remind international guests of Africa's vast geography; South Africa is thousands of kilometres away from the affected zones, meaning travel to South Africa continues as normal.

Because case figures are updated frequently, we recommend going directly to official sources rather than relying on any single document. Links are listed at the end of this document.

### **HOW EBOLA SPREADS — AND WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR CONVERSATIONS**

Ebola is not airborne. It does not spread through casual contact or in the way that respiratory illnesses like flu or COVID-19 do.

Transmission requires direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from the disease, or with surfaces and materials contaminated with those fluids. WHO confirms that people cannot transmit Ebola before they have symptoms, which may include fever, fatigue, muscle pain, vomiting, and/or diarrhoea.

It is also worth knowing that this outbreak is caused by the Bundibugyo virus – a distinct strain from the Ebola virus responsible for the 2014 to 2016 West Africa outbreak that many people will associate with the disease. The geography, the strain, and the context are different. Keeping this in mind will help you steer guest and staff conversations away from disproportionate fear and back toward the facts.

### **TALKING TO YOUR GUESTS: A READY-TO-USE FAQ**

We know that fielding guest questions about a health situation accurately and without causing unnecessary alarm is easier said than done. To make that a little simpler, we have put together a short FAQ that you can copy, paste, and share with guests directly.

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## **YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT EBOLA, ANSWERED**

### **Is it safe to travel to South Africa?**

South Africa currently has no reported cases and is not classified as an affected country by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. The risk to travellers in Southern Africa remains negligible, and you can continue to enjoy your stay with full confidence.

It is also worth knowing that international health monitoring systems and airport screening measures are already in place globally to detect and respond to potential cases at borders. These systems exist precisely for situations like this, and they are active.

### **Should I be worried about travelling through Africa?**

This depends on your specific itinerary. Travel to South Africa and Southern Africa is not affected by the current outbreak. If your plans include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, or South Sudan, we recommend consulting a travel clinic or medical practitioner and reviewing the latest official guidance from the World Health Organization at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) before you depart.

### **Can I catch Ebola from another guest or from staff?**

Ebola is not airborne and does not spread through casual contact. Transmission requires direct contact with the bodily fluids of a person who is already showing symptoms. The risk within a normal hospitality environment, including dining rooms, lobbies, pools, and shared spaces, is very low.

### **Are there special health protocols in place at the property?**

Our standard hygiene and health protocols remain fully in place and are entirely appropriate for the current situation. Our teams are informed, we are following all relevant public health guidance, and we are monitoring the situation as it develops.

It also helps to know that international health monitoring and airport screening systems already exist globally.

### **Where can I find the latest official information?**

For the most current guidance, we recommend the following official sources:

National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD): [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)

World Health Organization (WHO): [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC): [www.africacdc.org](http://www.africacdc.org)

Department of Health South Africa: [www.health.gov.za](http://www.health.gov.za)

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## **WHAT YOUR STAFF MAY ASK**

Staff – particularly those in housekeeping, food and beverage, and front-of-house – may have concerns, especially if they have encountered alarming coverage in the media.

The key message for your teams is the same as for your guests: Ebola is not airborne and does not spread through normal workplace contact. There is no elevated risk to hospitality staff in South Africa at this time.

If a guest presents with symptoms that concern your team, such as sudden fever, severe fatigue, or acute illness, your standard protocol for unwell guests applies. You do not need a separate Ebola protocol.

If a guest discloses recent travel to an affected area and presents with symptoms, direct them to medical care and contact the NICD toll-free helpline on 0800 029 999.

### **WHAT TO WATCH FOR WITH BOOKINGS**

There is no confirmed data at this stage indicating a material impact on inbound bookings to South Africa. However, if your property receives business from markets that may be more sensitised to the outbreak (particularly guests with East African itineraries), it is worth ensuring your reservations team is briefed and able to respond to questions calmly and accurately.

If you are experiencing cancellations or booking hesitancy that you believe is related to the outbreak, please let FEDHASA know. We are tracking the broader picture and will advocate on behalf of the industry where it is needed.

### **WHAT TO AVOID**

Do not share unverified information, including social media posts or media reports that have not been confirmed by official public health sources.

Do not issue your own health advisories or make claims about safety that go beyond what official public health bodies have stated. Refer guests and staff to official guidance and, where appropriate, to medical professionals.

Do not conflate this outbreak with past Ebola outbreaks. The strain, geography, and context are meaningfully different.

### **OFFICIAL SOURCES TO MONITOR**

National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD): [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)

World Health Organization (WHO): [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC): [www.africacdc.org](http://www.africacdc.org)

Department of Health South Africa: [www.health.gov.za](http://www.health.gov.za)

### **A NOTE FROM FEDHASA**

Situations like this one test the hospitality industry's ability to remain calm, informed, and guest-focused under pressure. That is precisely what our members do best.

Responding well does not require having all the answers. It requires honesty, composure, and the confidence to direct people to credible guidance. If your teams feel uncertain about how to handle a particular query, encourage them to acknowledge the concern, avoid speculation, and refer to the

official sources listed above. That approach - measured, transparent, and grounded in facts - is what builds lasting trust with guests and partners.

FEDHASA will continue to monitor credible public health sources and will share further guidance if the situation develops in a way that materially affects our members or the broader industry. In the meantime, we are here if you have questions.

*This guidance note is based on information available from official public health sources as of 28 May 2026. It is intended to support members in responding to queries and should not replace medical advice or official public health guidance. Members are encouraged to consult official sources directly for the most current information.*