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Navajo Nation Health Advisory – Ebola Virus Disease

Window Rock, AZ – Although it is unlikely for an Ebola case to present on the Navajo Nation, this public health advisory is being distributed to provide information about the Ebola Virus Disease.

What is Ebola? Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with Ebola virus. Ebola can cause disease in humans and nonhuman primates (monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees). Ebola is caused by an infection with a virus of the family *Filoviridae*, genus *Ebolavirus*. Ebola viruses are found in several African countries. The natural reservoir host of Ebola virus remains unknown. However, on the basis of evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe that the virus is animal-borne and that bats are the most likely reservoir.

Symptoms of Ebola: Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola.

- High fever (>101.5°F)
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal (stomach) pain
- Weakness
- Unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

Transmission of Ebola: Ebola virus is spread to others through direct contact with: (1) bodily fluids (blood, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, semen, urine) of a person who is sick with Ebola; (2) objects (needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus; (3) infected animals.

- **What does "direct contact" mean?** It means that bodily fluids from an infected person (alive or dead) have touched someone's eyes, nose, mouth, or an open cut, wound, or abrasion.
- **Can Ebola spread by coughing or sneezing?** Although coughing and sneezing are not common symptoms of Ebola, if a symptomatic patient with Ebola coughs or sneezes on someone, and saliva and mucous come into contact with that person's eyes, nose or mouth, these fluids may transmit the disease.
- **How long does Ebola live outside the body?** Ebola is killed with hospital-grade disinfectants (household bleach). Ebola on dried surfaces (doorknobs, countertops) can survive for several hours.
- **If someone survives Ebola, can he or she still spread the virus?** Upon recovery, they can no longer spread the virus. However, Ebola virus has been found in semen for up to 3 months. Therefore, people who recover are advised to abstain from sex or use condoms for 3 months.

Prevention of Ebola: There is no vaccine available for Ebola. The recommendations are: (1) practice good hygiene (wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer); (2) do not handle items (clothes, bedding, needles, medical equipment) that may have come in contact with an infected person; (3) avoid funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who has died from Ebola; (4) healthcare workers who may be exposed to people with Ebola should wear protective clothing, including masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection; (5) isolate persons with Ebola from other people; (6) notify health officials if you have had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola.