

Wuhan virus cases to face quarantine

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Centers for Disease Control Deputy Director-General Chuang Jen-hsiang speaks at a news conference in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) yesterday said it is preparing to list a viral pneumonia of an unknown cause originating from China's Wuhan as a category 5 communicable disease.

Fifty-nine cases had been reported in China as of yesterday, with seven showing severe symptoms, it said.

The CDC on Tuesday last week started conducting onboard inspections of direct flights from Wuhan, it added.

It has conducted inspections on 13 flights, covering a total of 1,193 passengers and crew members, the CDC said.

Nine people were found with symptoms, which later improved, it said, adding that local health departments are tracking their recovery.

One person was found to have been infected with the H3N2 flu virus, while another, who is being tested, had been to Wuhan, but had not visited the Huanan Seafood City market and had not come into contact with poultry, it added.

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Listing the illness as a category 5 communicable disease would allow the CDC to quarantine suspected cases according to the guidelines for communicable disease prevention, it said.

This would eliminate instances of people refusing to be quarantined, it said, adding that it would complete the listing as soon as possible.

The CDC said that it would also raise the alert internationally and at “small three links” ports.

It would ask passengers with a fever whether they had traveled to Wuhan, it said.

The CDC on Tuesday issued a level 1 “watch” health notice for travelers to Wuhan due to the outbreak, saying that it has also asked health professionals in the city for information to better understand the disease.

People planning to travel to Wuhan and its surrounding areas should take precautions, including avoiding direct exposure to livestock, raw meat markets and infected people, it said, adding that they should also frequently wash their hands with soap and wear a surgical mask when entering crowded areas.

The CDC on Monday said that SARS and Middle East respiratory syndrome have been excluded as possible causes of the outbreak, but added that the cause has not yet been identified.

“There is limited information to determine the overall risk of this reported cluster of pneumonia of unknown etiology,” said the WHO’s report on “pneumonia of unknown cause in China,” which was released on Sunday.

It advised against the application of any travel or trade restrictions on China based on the

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information available.

The WHO recommended public health measures, and surveillance of possible influenza and severe acute respiratory infections, and urged travelers experiencing respiratory illness either during or after travel to seek medical attention and share their travel history with their healthcare provider.

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