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JIC UPDATE ON PREPAREDNESS:

STATE SURGEON GENERAL: FLORIDA HOSPITALS ARE PREPARED FOR EBOLA
~160 Florida Hospitals Have Completed Ebola-Specific Training~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Upon the release of the Center for Disease Control’s list of 36 hospitals the federal government deemed “Ebola Ready,” the Florida Department of Health today reaffirmed that all Florida hospitals are prepared to treat a patient with Ebola. Beginning in October, Florida hospitals were asked by the state to establish mandatory Ebola training programs to protect healthcare professionals. To date, 160 of 210 hospitals from every region of the state have completed this training.

“We are thankful we do not have a case of Ebola in Florida and we hope we never do. Our top priority is making sure that all of our residents and visitors stay safe,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “The CDC’s list of ‘Ebola Ready’ hospitals does not take into account that Florida hospitals began preparing for Ebola months ago so that every hospital in Florida is prepared to treat an Ebola patient. Also, today, we are renewing our requests for the federal government to provide additional testing kits and to conduct Ebola screening at Florida airports, which they have still failed to do. The CDC needs to immediately fulfill our requests to help keep Florida prepared for any possible Ebola case.”

This fall, the Florida Department of Health requested the CDC to provide 30 additional Ebola testing kits, and only three have been received. Additionally, Ebola screenings are not being conducted by federal officials at Florida airports after the state made the request.

In October, Governor Scott ordered the establishment of two Florida National Guard Medical Response Teams to go above and beyond CDC requirements. Each National Guard Rapid Response team of 16 will include doctors, nurses and equipment personnel. These two National Guard teams have undergone intensive training and are ready to assist healthcare workers, if they are ever needed to supplement a hospital's existing personnel.

The Department continues to carry out Governor Rick Scott’s Executive Order to conduct 21-day health monitoring and risk assessments for all those who have returned to Florida from the CDC-designated Ebola-affected countries of Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. Public health staff from the Department’s county offices visit these individuals twice daily for health assessments and in-person temperature checks. As of December 10, the
Department is currently monitoring 29 low-risk individuals. To date, a total of 66 low-risk individuals have been monitored in the state.

There are 39 existing hospital and emergency responder support packages with personal protective equipment (PPE) that have been positioned regionally across Florida for rapid deployment. In addition to the Department’s Miami lab, the Florida Public Health Laboratories in Jacksonville and Tampa are gaining CDC approval to conduct Ebola testing. Guidance for in-patient care management of Ebola patients has been developed in coordination with partners from 10 professional medical associations. Two videos demonstrating appropriate PPE management were produced and widely distributed.

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