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CHINA

Coronavirus Death Toll Rises in China as U.S. Reports Second Case

New U.S. case involves a Chicago woman who traveled to China last month and returned on Jan. 13



A police officer checking the temperature of a driver on a highway in Wuhan, the central Chinese city in Hubei province where the coronavirus outbreak began. PHOTO: STR/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By Stephanie Yang and Brianna Abbott

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The tally of deaths and infections from the spread of the new coronavirus in China jumped again on Friday—with authorities canceling large public gatherings and locking down more cities—as the U.S. confirmed its second infection and the disease spread into Europe and Australia for the first time.

The number of infections had risen to at least 1,287 confirmed cases as of the end of Friday, China's National Health Commission reported Saturday morning local time, more than doubling the total number from just a day earlier. The official death count rose to at least 41, all of them within China. Confirmed cases were reported for the first time in France, where authorities counted three coronavirus infections.



Medical staff transferring a patient at Hospital of Wuhan Red Cross Society in Wuhan. PHOTO: STRINGER/SHUTTERSTOCK

media separately reported the death on Saturday morning of a doctor at one of the main hospitals treating coronavirus patients in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the outbreak began. The 62-year-old ear, nose and throat doctor is believed to be the first doctor to have died from the disease, and would bring the total count up to 42. Health officials in the southwestern province of Guangxi also reported Saturday morning the infection of a 2-year-old girl.

The new U.S. case involves a woman in her 60s from Chicago who had traveled to Wuhan in late December and returned to the U.S. on Jan. 13, Chicago's health commissioner said, adding that the woman has been isolated in a hospital and is doing well.

A man in his 30s in Washington state who had traveled to Wuhan had been diagnosed with the virus earlier this week.

Officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said they expected the virus would spread to more people in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world.

The French health ministry said on Friday that one patient had been hospitalized in Bordeaux, in the south of France, while two other patients were hospitalized in Paris.

In Australia, health officials Saturday confirmed the country's first case of coronavirus, a Chinese man in his 50s who had flown into Melbourne last week after having spent time in Wuhan.

Singapore said it had two new confirmed coronavirus cases, bringing the total number there to three. All are residents of Wuhan, visiting Singapore over the weeklong Lunar New Year holiday. Separately, Taiwan's health ministry, which confirmed its first case earlier this week, added two more on Friday, bringing the separately governed island's tally to three.

Confirmed cases have also appeared in Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Nepal and the Chinese territories of Hong Kong and Macau.

The Wuhan virus belongs to a family of respiratory viruses that can be spread by coughing, kissing or making contact with saliva. Often, these coronaviruses simply cause common colds. But others have been more serious, even deadly.

Readers Weigh In

Does China's move to restrict travel in and out of Wuhan make you more or less worried about the spread of the disease?

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“When I worked in public health emergency management, the CDC had a vivid presentation that showed the spread of any disease from a major airport hub. This is serious stuff.” — Roger Arango

Health officials believe that the incubation period for the virus is around 14 days, meaning it could take roughly two weeks for someone infected with the virus to develop symptoms. People are most likely not contagious before symptoms develop, health officials said.

U.S. authorities have been screening international travelers arriving at five major airports for fevers and other symptoms of an infection, while alerting hospitals to take measures to screen people who have traveled to Wuhan.

The CDC said that it is currently re-evaluating the screening process. So far, over 2,000 people coming into the U.S. have been screened from roughly 200 flights.

The Chicago woman who was infected didn't show symptoms until a few days after returning to the U.S., health authorities said. After learning about the woman's trip, her doctor took steps to prevent further spread, including sending the woman to a hospital with infection control.

Authorities in Chicago expressed doubt that the woman who became the U.S. second confirmed case had transmitted the virus, because she didn't have symptoms while flying—and after returning to the U.S., didn't take public transportation or attend any large gatherings. In addition, she didn't have long, close contact with anyone outside her home, they added.

President Trump said in a tweet Friday that the U.S. “greatly appreciates” China's efforts to control the coronavirus, and its transparency. He singled out Chinese President Xi Jinping for praise.

In China, officials have shut down parts of the Great Wall and canceled Lunar New Year events as part of efforts to stop the spread of the respiratory virus. They have also halted public transportation out of several cities in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital and largest city, and where the vast majority of the cases have been identified. On Thursday morning, local officials locked down Wuhan, a major transportation hub that is home to 11 million people. Outbound flights and trains were canceled and roads leading out of the city were blocked.

Within a day, at least a dozen other cities in Hubei had said they would also suspend public transportation, according to the Communist Party's flagship newspaper, People's Daily. Several more cities imposed restrictions Friday on human movement, including Jingzhou, a city of 6.6 million people—which banned buses, cars and ferries from leaving. It set up body temperature checkpoints at stations and highways around the city.

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In neighboring Henan province, Guangshan county, with a population of 860,000, set up its own restrictions on travel, a sign that the lockdowns are spreading beyond Hubei province.

In Beijing, the Forbidden City and sections of the Great Wall were closed until further notice, while

Shanghai closed many major venues including museums, movie theaters and Shanghai Disneyland Park.

The U.S. and Japan, meantime, warned travelers not to visit Hubei province.

The State Department has ordered the departure of all nonemergency personnel and family members, warning that the American government is limited in its ability to provide emergency services to citizens still in the province. Japan said its citizens should avoid Hubei province entirely.

The World Health Organization decided not to declare a global public health emergency on Thursday, saying it was still too early for such a move. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus added the situation may change in the coming days.

—*Jon Emont in Singapore and James Glynn in Sydney contributed to this article.*

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