



ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention
1000 Broadway, 5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

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PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

November 20, 2014

SITUATION:

On Wednesday, November 18th 2014, filters in all of the BioWatch sites in the San Francisco Bay Area BioWatch Program tested positive for *Bacillus anthracis* DNA. Per the San Francisco Bay Area BioWatch Consequence Management Plan, a BioWatch Actionable Result (BAR) was declared at 0800 hrs, followed by local and national response actions. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are conducting an investigation to identify the source and cause (intentional v. unintentional) of the exposure and to determine the extent of the impacted areas and the populations affected.

Due to the possible widespread exposure to the public, Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) activated its Point of Dispensing (POD) and Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) distribution plans. Alameda County Staff have been assigned to the county RSS location to receive additional SNS shipments. ACPHD push plans have been activated and medical countermeasures are currently being distributed. Alameda County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been activated and is being staffed.

Anthrax is not communicable. However, the number of persons exposed to anthrax is currently unknown. As of November 20, 2014, **NO** cases have been reported to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Health officials are preparing for patients to present with symptoms related to anthrax exposure in the coming days and weeks. Early identification of potentially exposed persons and suspect anthrax cases and prompt treatment will be key components of Alameda County's anthrax response strategy.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF CLINICIANS:

1. **CONSIDER *B. Anthracis* infection** in patients that **meet the criteria** for suspected cases:
 - a. Any person with illness suggestive of cutaneous, inhalation, or gastrointestinal anthrax (see [CDC Anthrax 2010 Case Definition](#)) AND
 - b. **Epidemiologic risk factors within the past 42 days before onset** of symptoms including:
 - i. Residence in—or travel to—the following counties on November 18, 2014: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, or Sonoma Counties.
2. **IMPLEMENT STANDARD & CONTACT PRECAUTIONS immediately** for suspected cases. Person-to-person transmission does not occur for GI or inhalational anthrax, and is possible but extremely rare from cutaneous lesions.
3. **REPORT suspect anthrax cases IMMEDIATELY** to Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) **by phone at (510) 267-3250**.
4. **TEST suspected cases.** ACPHD and Alameda County Public Health Lab (ACPHL) will provide special instructions concerning specimen handling. Do NOT send specimens without consulting first with our public health laboratory.



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BACKGROUND: *B. anthracis* is an aerobic, gram-positive, encapsulated, spore-forming, nonhemolytic, nonmotile, rod-shaped bacterium. It causes an acute infection called anthrax that can manifest differently according to the route of exposure: cutaneous, inhalation, and gastrointestinal. Each of these forms can progress to systemic disease, which may present clinically with signs of septicemia with the subsequent development of meningoenzephalitis. Exposure to aerosolized *B anthracis* is likely to result in a predominance of inhalation and cutaneous anthrax cases; however, gastrointestinal cases also may occur.

MANAGING EXPOSURES

Persons with an exposure or contact with an item or environment known, or suspected to be contaminated with *B. anthracis*---regardless of laboratory tests results---should be offered antimicrobial prophylaxis. Laboratory testing will not be done locally for asymptomatic patients.

LABORATORY TESTING:

Refer to [CDC Recommendations for Microbiology and Pathology for Diagnosis: Inhalation, Cutaneous, and Gastrointestinal Anthrax](#) for specimen collection, transportation and testing guidelines.

Please call ACPHD ACD at (510) 267-3250 for prior approval for PHL testing. ACPHL will conduct initial testing and forward all suspect and preliminary positive *B. anthracis* specimens to the CDPH Microbial Disease Laboratory (MDL) for further characterization. Additional technical assistance with specimen processing and shipping is available from the ACPHL at (510) 268-2700.

Additional Information

Bay Area Mass Prophylaxis Working Group (BAMPWG): <http://www.bayareadisastermeds.org/>

CDPH: [BEPREPARED CALIFNORA: ANTHRAX](#)

CDC: [Health Care Providers Guidance and Recommendations](#)

Health ALERT: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health ADVISORY: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health UPDATE: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

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