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Death of worker at plague lab raises concerns – 8th October 2026

Level 0

A worker at a research laboratory in Siberia died. Local reports say she may have broken a test tube of pneumonic plague bacteria. Russia said the woman's death was from "pneumonia of an unknown origin" and not plague. The USA said there was no "cause for alarm," but officials should "keep an eye on it".

Pneumonic plague can be deadly. It can kill in 18 hours. It spreads quickly through the air when someone coughs. It can be treated if drugs are given when symptoms appear. A scientist said: "Pneumonic plague can spread from person to person, and that is why there is the concern around this."

Level 1

The USA is worried after a worker at a research laboratory in Siberia died. She died of severe pneumonia. Local reports say she may have broken a test tube of pneumonic plague bacteria. Officials are checking people who were in contact with her. Russia said the woman's death was from "pneumonia of an unknown origin" and not plague. The USA said there was no "cause for alarm". However, it said officials should "keep an eye on it".

Pneumonic plague can be deadly. It attacks the lungs. It can kill in 18 hours. It also spreads quickly. It moves through the air when someone coughs. The disease can be treated with medicine if drugs are given when symptoms appear. Pneumonic plague is different from COVID-19, which is caused by a virus. A microbiologist said: "Pneumonic plague can spread from person to person, and that is why there is the concern around this."

Level 2

The USA is worried after a worker at a research laboratory in Siberia died. Some newspapers suspect that she came into contact with plague bacteria. She died after developing severe pneumonia. Local reports say she may have broken a test tube of plague bacteria. Officials are checking people who were in contact with the worker. Russia said the woman's death was from "pneumonia of an unknown origin" and not plague. The US secretary of state said there was no "cause for alarm". However, he said officials should "keep an eye on it".

Pneumonic plague can be deadly. It attacks the lungs. It can kill 18 to 24 hours after symptoms begin. It can also spread quickly. It moves from person to person through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. The disease can be treated with antibiotics if they are given as soon as symptoms appear. Pneumonic plague is different from COVID-19, which is caused by a virus and not a bacterium. A microbiologist told the BBC: "Pneumonic plague can spread from person to person, and that is why there is the concern around this."

Level 3

The USA has raised concerns after a worker at a plague research laboratory in Siberia died. Some newspapers suspect that she died after coming into contact with plague bacteria. The 28-year-old worker died after developing severe pneumonia. Local reports say she may have broken a test tube containing plague bacteria. Dozens of hospital workers have been quarantined. Officials are monitoring people who were in contact with the woman who died. Russia has said the woman's death was from "pneumonia of an unknown origin" and not plague. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said there was no "cause for alarm". He said officials should "keep an eye on it".

Pneumonic plague can be deadly. It attacks the lungs and can cause death 18 to 24 hours after symptoms begin. It is highly contagious, so it can spread quickly. It can move from person to person through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The disease can be treated with antibiotics. However, antibiotics work best when they are given as soon as symptoms appear. Pneumonic plague is different from COVID-19, which is caused by a virus and not a bacterium. COVID-19 spreads much more easily around the world than plague. Microbiologist Dr Simon Clarke told the BBC: "Pneumonic plague can spread from person to person, and that is why there is the concern around this."