



# The International Health Regulations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

### WHAT ARE THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS?

The IHR are an international agreement between all member nations of the World Health Organization to monitor, report on and respond to any events that could pose a threat to international public health.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE IHR?

To prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. (International Health Regulations, Article 2)



### WHAT IS A PHEIC?

An extraordinary public health event:

- that constitutes a public health risk to other countries through its international spread and
- that may require a coordinated international response

#### ALWAYS REPORTABLE DISEASES




Smallpox

Novel Influenza

SARS

Poliomyelitis due to wild type polio virus

How many countries participate?..... 194  
 When did they begin? ..... 2007  
 Who oversees the IHR? ..... WHO  
 What is the deadline for implementation? ..... 2012

 <p><b>BIOLOGICAL</b></p> <p>Infectious disease threats are the most commonly associated with the IHR and were the driver behind the first international health agreements in the 19th century. While the IHR 2005 requires the notification of any case of a handful of diseases, the agreement is also intended to cover emerging infections as early as they can be identified through surveillance.</p>	 <p><b>RADIO-NUCLEAR</b></p> <p>Release of radiation, whether intentional or accidental, has potential for significant public health implications. The Polonium-210 contamination of several sites in London after the 2006 assassination of Alexander Litvinenko made clear the public health impacts of smaller radio-nuclear incidents. The public health response required international coordination of the tracing and screening of hundreds of people in the UK and US to test for Polonium-210 poisoning.</p>
 <p><b>CHEMICAL</b></p> <p>Chemical threats to health may include industrial incidents, water pollution, food contamination, and other potential chemical exposures. The recent melamine contamination of infant formula is one example of the potential for international health risks from chemical contamination.</p>	<p><b>? OTHER</b></p> <p>Other potential international threats to human health may occur unexpectedly. Unidentified diseases may fall into this category as well as population-level health effects of unknown origin.</p>

### KEY FEATURES OF THE IHR

- Require reporting of specific diseases and potential public health emergencies
- Establish core capacities to ensure surveillance and response capabilities for all countries
- Create a process for international collaboration and decision making in emergency situations
- Unify the international approach to defining and addressing public health emergencies

