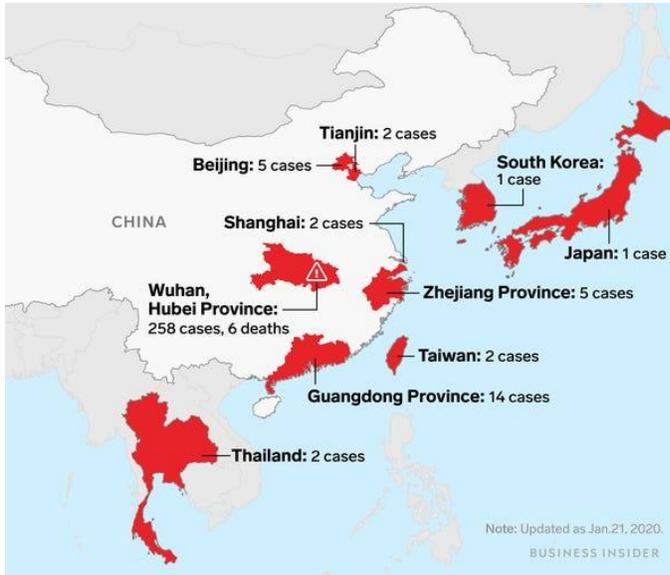




# Viral Outbreak in China ahead of Chinese New Year



A product of the OSAC Research and Information Support Center (RISC)



## SUMMARY

Reports of a new Chinese coronavirus appeared in Wuhan on December 12, according to the city's [health bureau](#). This virus is related to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus, which caused a severe epidemic in China from 2002-2004. As of January 21, there have been nearly [300 cases](#) of this new virus in China, most of which are in Wuhan, as well as six deaths. The cases reported in other countries were all connected to individuals who had recently traveled from Wuhan.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will convene an Emergency Committee on January 22 to determine if the outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (past WHO public health emergencies included swine flu and Ebola). Chinese authorities are responding quickly, and have been [highly efficient](#) in lab investigations. based on currently available data, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has issued a [Health Alert](#) for the disease. While a Chinese expert has documented a case of virus transmission from human to human, the CDC characterizes the disease as having only limited human-to-human transmission and notes that it is unclear how efficiently the virus is spreading. It is important to note that the next two weeks mark the Chinese New Year celebration, when huge portions of the country's population will be traveling; this could exacerbate the issue. The virus, as well as security measures to mitigate its effects, could have implications for those working in China and East Asia more broadly.

## THE VIRUS

The virus, also known as 2019-nCoV, is a new strain of coronavirus not previously identified in humans and seems to have originated from infected animals at a seafood market in Wuhan. Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses common among animals. In rare cases, they are [zoonotic](#), meaning they can transmit from animals to humans. (SARS and MERS are examples of zoonotic coronaviruses) This virus causes [respiratory symptoms](#) such as pneumonia, runny nose, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, headaches, and fevers, which can last for a couple of days, and doesn't respond to antibiotic treatment.

The virus's symptoms are similar to those of SARS. However, no case of SARS has appeared since the epidemic ended in 2004. This strain does not seem as deadly as other coronaviruses have been; for comparison, SARS killed [10%](#) of those infected. Meanwhile, those individuals who have died from this outbreak had preexisting conditions. Health care workers were among those infected. There is currently [no specific antiviral treatment](#) for the virus.

## LOCATION

### Virus: flights from Wuhan, China

More than 2,300 flights planned from January 20-27



The cases began in Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei Province, located approximately 800km west of Shanghai. They then spread through China to Guangdong Province, Zhejiang Province, Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Taiwan, as well as to South Korea, Thailand, and Japan. The CDC announced the first case reported [within the United States](#), in Washington State, as of January 21. The CDC said it expects to see more cases in the United States. The situation remains fluid and many more cases are expected.

## SPRING FESTIVAL

The Spring Festival, running from Chinese New Year on January 24 through the Lantern Festival on February 8, is a very popular vacation period in China. According to the [Washington Post](#), Spring Festival is the world's largest human migration, with up to three billion trips. The massive increase in travel will help the virus spread much faster than it would at any other time; the number of cases is likely to increase quickly, as is the geographic spread of the disease.

Authorities have [stepped up screening](#) at airports, railway stations, and on highways in an effort to stem the spread of the disease. The CDC noted that airports in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City, which handle 75% of all Wuhan passengers entering the U.S., are monitoring incoming passengers. Similar screenings are taking place at [Wuhan Tianhe International Airport \(WUH\)](#), and in Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Thailand. [China Daily](#) reported that Premier Li Keqiang issued instructions on Monday urging local governments to identify, report, isolate, and treat patients in a timely manner, and to promptly and objectively release information about disease prevention and control.

## MITIGATION

The CDC has not called for limiting travel to China; however Chinese officials have advised against travel to Wuhan and North Korea has closed its borders to Chinese travelers in response to the virus. The CDC is not recommending people wear masks at this time as the disease is spread from people touching their faces and if people wear masks, they are more likely to touch their faces.

When traveling to Wuhan or another area where the virus is present the CDC recommends:



- Avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat);
- Avoid contact with sick people; and
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Older travelers and those with underlying health issues may be at a higher risk and should discuss travel to Wuhan with their healthcare provider.

- Consult the [CDC website](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding enhanced screening procedures.

**If you have traveled to Wuhan and feel sick, you should:**

- Seek medical care immediately, but call ahead to let the doctor's office know of your travels and symptoms;
- Except for seeking medical care, stay home and avoid contact with others;
- Don't travel while sick; and
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (not your hands) while coughing or sneezing.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For additional information on the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, contact OSAC's [Asia-Pacific team](#), and consider the following resources.

- CDC: [2019 Nove Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#)
- CDC: [Level 2 Novel Coronavirus in China: Practice Enhanced Precautions](#)
- [OSAC China webpage](#)
- [U.S. Mission China Health Alert](#)
- [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory for China](#)
- OSAC Report: [What's Bugging Your Staff: Air-borne Diseases](#)
- OSAC Report: [What's Bugging Your Staff: Air-borne Diseases: Duty of Care](#)