

For Immediate Release:
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New Mexico, Texas, Colorado Alerts Bus Passengers to TB Case that traveled in August

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas Departments of Health announced today that a person recently diagnosed with infectious tuberculosis (TB) in New Mexico traveled on an interstate commercial bus that originated from El Paso, Texas. The bus traveled through New Mexico to its final destination of Greeley, Colorado.

It is important to know that **only** passengers who rode the bus with the tuberculosis case on Sunday, August 3, 2008 and/or Saturday, August 9, 2008 were at risk for being exposed to that case of tuberculosis.

The individual who has tuberculosis traveled on August 3. The bus departed from El Paso, Texas at 8 a.m. and the person with TB boarded the bus in Albuquerque at approximately 12:30 p.m. The bus arrived in Greeley later that evening.

Although the tuberculosis case boarded the bus in Albuquerque on August 3, any passengers who may have boarded the bus in El Paso, Texas, Las Cruces, Belen, or Albuquerque, and continued on the bus to later stops on the route to Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver, or Greeley are asked to call one of the numbers below for instructions on what to do.

The patient with TB also returned to Albuquerque on Saturday, August 9, traveling with the same bus company and leaving Greeley at about 9 a.m. to arrive in Albuquerque at 5 p.m. Any passengers who boarded the return bus on August 9 in Greeley, Denver, Colorado Springs or Pueblo, Colo. are also asked to call the appropriate health department as well.

Please call the office nearest to you.

El Paso City/County Health at (915) 771-1230

New Mexico Department of Health at (505) 827-2473

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at (888)356-0332

Dr. Marcos Burgos, the New Mexico Department of Health's TB Medical Director, said people often delay seeking care and may be ill with symptoms of tuberculosis for many weeks or months before it is diagnosed.

“People can expose others to tuberculosis without knowing they have the disease,” Dr. Burgos said. “During the contact investigation process, which requires several interviews with the case, we identify all the possible individuals who may have been exposed to TB. It is not unusual for people exposed to be notified weeks or months later of their potential exposure.”

Tuberculosis is a disease caused by germs that can be spread from one person to another through the air when a person with active TB coughs, sneezes, speaks or sings. Anyone sharing air for prolonged periods of time with a person with infectious TB can breathe TB germs into their lungs. TB germs can live in the body for many years in an inactive form without causing illness. This is called latent TB infection. People with latent TB infection cannot spread TB to others, but they are at risk of developing TB disease if their infection goes untreated. In some people with conditions that weaken the immune system there may be a greater risk of progressing from latent TB infection to TB disease.

TB disease is different from latent TB infection. In TB disease the germs are actively growing, causing symptoms such as cough, fever, weight loss, and fatigue. People with TB disease can transmit TB to others.

Although the risk of TB infection from exposure on a bus is considered small, it is very important that passengers be medically evaluated. The medical evaluation may involve the following:

- A TB skin test or blood test to help determine if you have TB infection
- People with positive TB skin tests or blood tests or symptoms of TB will be asked to have a chest x-ray
- They may also be asked to give a sample of sputum (phlegm coughed up from the lungs)
- Anyone found to have TB infection or TB disease will be offered treatment

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