

## **Explanation for the Legislative Coordinating Council on the Necessity of Extending the Governor's State of Disaster Emergency for Hantavirus Through June 7, 2026**

### **I. Proclamation Overview**

On May 2, 2026, a cluster of passengers with severe respiratory illness aboard a Dutch cruise ship, the MV Hondius, experienced severe respiratory illness. Upon laboratory testing, it was identified as Hantavirus Andes virus strain, which is notable for being the only Hantavirus that can spread between people, particularly through close, prolonged contact. As a part of the Andes virus outbreak, there have been at least eight confirmed and suspected cases, including three deaths.

The outbreak prompted international monitoring efforts and the evacuation and repatriation of passengers to their home countries. Currently, no cases of Andes virus related to this outbreak have been reported in the United States. Federal, state, and local health authorities, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state health departments, and local health departments are actively monitoring returning passengers and individuals who may have been exposed during travel or in public settings and providing guidance on symptom monitoring and isolation if necessary.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is providing guidance and taking measures to minimize the risk of exposure and infection to the general public, while supporting public health and medical professionals with technical assistance, contact tracing, monitoring, laboratory testing, epidemiological surveillance, and other activities associated with the control of the virus.

The Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM) is coordinating resources to support KDHE, local public health and county emergency managers.

### **II. About Hantavirus**

- Hantaviruses are a family of viruses which can cause serious illnesses and death.
- People usually get hantavirus from contact with rodents, especially when exposed to their urine, droppings, and saliva.
- Hantaviruses can also spread through a bite or scratch by a rodent, but this is rare.
- New World Hantaviruses found in the Western Hemisphere, including here in the United States, can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS is a severe and potentially deadly disease that affects the lungs.
- WHO has confirmed that the type of hantavirus responsible for this outbreak is the Andes virus.

## About Andes Virus

- Andes virus is a type of hantavirus spread by rodents in South America.
- Andes virus primarily spreads to humans through contact with long-tailed rice rats which are found throughout much of Argentina and Chile.
- The Andes virus is the only type of hantavirus that is known to spread person-to-person. This spread is usually limited to people who have prolonged close contact with the ill person.
- This includes direct physical contact, prolonged time spent in close or enclosed spaces, and exposure to the infected person's saliva, respiratory secretions, or other body fluids (e.g., kissing, sharing utensils, handling contaminated bedding).
- Like other hantavirus infections, Andes virus infection can lead to a severe respiratory disease called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS).
- It is different than the hantaviruses found in the United States, which are not known to spread person-to-person.

## III. Statutory Basis for Extension

The Governor's authority to issue and maintain a state of disaster emergency is established in KSA 48-924

*Disasters; responsibilities of governor; state of disaster emergency; continuation, extension and termination; requirements of proclamation; activation of disaster response and recovery of state disaster plan; state of drought.* The statute provides:

- A state of disaster emergency so declared shall continue until the governor finds that the threat or danger of disaster has passed, or the disaster has been dealt with to the extent that emergency conditions no longer exist.
- A declaration is valid for **15 days** and may be extended by the LCC for specified periods **up to 30 days each**.
- The proclamation activates the disaster response and recovery aspects of the Kansas Response Plan and authorizes the use of state resources, interjurisdictional coordination, and requests for federal and state emergency funding.

## IV. Why the LCC Should Extension the Declaration

Kansas had three residents that were exposed to a symptomatic individual during international travel in a public setting. It was later identified that individual tested positive for Hantavirus. Extending the declaration through June 7, 2026, ensures:

- The observation period is 42 days from the date of last exposure to a symptomatic positive case; and the last day of observation for the three individuals is June 7, 2026.
- The strain of Hantavirus that the individuals have been exposed to is the Andes virus, which is the only type of Hantavirus that can be transmitted human to human though it is difficult to do, takes prolonged contact. There is not a treatment for Hantavirus, rapid access to advanced supportive care is critical.
- Should any of the three individuals develop symptoms between now and June 7, the state would need to coordinate medical transport to get them to KU Medical Center, placed in the biocontainment unit and would need to have access to an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) if needed. This transport would need to be coordinated outside of the regularly scheduled ambulances that are in service.
- Extending the declaration allows for KDEM and KDHE to coordinate life safety and life sustainment services if needed. In addition, if any of the individuals develop symptoms and they are not transported to a biocontainment unit, the risk for exposure and transmission to others greatly increases.