



Hong Kong Enforces Quarantine in Amoy Garden Apartments to Slow SARS Pneumonia Spread

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All travelers in Hong Kong will be required to fill out health declaration forms at all departure and arrival points. Staff will be posted at checkpoints to look for travelers who show symptoms of the still-unidentified SARS virus. Photograph © 2003 by Associated Press.

March 31, 2003 Hong Kong, China - SARS stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome, a deadly new disease that attacks and destroys lung tissue. What the pathogen is exactly has still not been proved, although electron microscope observations suggest either a new *Paramyxovirus* (measles, mumps, childhood croup) or *Coronavirus* (common cold) virus. Yesterday, sixty new patients were admitted to Hong Kong hospitals suffering fever, dry cough and difficulty breathing - all symptoms of SARS pneumonia.

Hong Kong health authorities discovered that 213 residents of Amoy Garden in the Kowloon District had been hospitalized as SARS victims. Amoy Garden consists of ten 35-story buildings housing around 15,000 people. Health officials also discovered that about half of the Amoy Garden SARS patients lived in "Block E," a series of apartments built vertically one on top of the other. Whatever the SARS microbe is, a vertical spread of the disease implies transmission can occur beyond close human contact. So, World Health Organization (W.H.O.) investigators are following up "the possibility that bodily secretions containing the causative virus might somehow enter common systems that link rooms or flats together."

The Hong Kong Department of Health issued an unprecedented order today to quarantine *all* the residents in Block E. Everyone must remain in their apartments until midnight on April 9. Violators can be fined as much as \$2,800 U. S. dollars, or jailed.

As of March 31, 2003

United States

Suspected SARS pneumonia cases in the United States have climbed to 62 in 23 states.

Alabama 1
California 14
Connecticut 1

Georgia 1
Hawaii 3
Illinois 2
Kansas 1
Maine 2
Massachusetts 2
Michigan 2
Missouri 2
Mississippi 1
Minnesota 3
New Hampshire 1
New Jersey 2
New Mexico 1
North Carolina 2
New York 10
Ohio 1
Pennsylvania 3
Rhode Island 1
Texas 3
Utah 4
Virginia 3
Washington 1
Wisconsin 2

Total Suspected U. S. Cases Under Investigation: 69

Worldwide:

Canada 44 cases, 4 deaths
China 806 cases, 34 deaths
China, Hong Kong 530 cases, 13 deaths
China, Taiwan, 10
France, 1
Germany 5
Italy 2
Ireland 2
Romania 3
Singapore 91 cases, 3 deaths
Switzerland, 3
Thailand 5 cases, 1 death
United Kingdom 3
United States 69
Viet Nam 58 cases, 4 deaths

Current World Total: 1632 Cases and 59 Deaths

More Information:

David Heymann, Executive Director of Communicable Diseases at the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) in Geneva, Switzerland, recommends that any person who has a sudden fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit accompanied by difficulty breathing should go immediately to an emergency room. Patients who have received good hospital support care, including ventilators, have survived. In fact, the mortality rate of the SARS pneumonia is running only about 3 to 5 %, but the potential severe lung damage in some of the cases demands expert medical treatment and x-rays.

Websites:

<http://www.who.int/en/> (World Health Organization)

<http://www.cdc.gov/> (Centers for Disease Control)

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