

New York raises Monkeypox alarm while San Francisco declares emergency



A staff member prepares a monkeypox vaccine in a drive-through monkeypox vaccination point at the Westchester Medical Center in New York [File: Reuters]

New York, July 29 (RHC)-- New York and San Francisco have issued Monkeypox alerts as cases continue to rise and the United States faces a shortage of vaccines.

Authorities in New York said on Thursday the virus “represented an imminent threat” to public health across the state. Health Commissioner Mary T Bassett said the declaration would help health departments engaged in response and prevention activities “to access additional State reimbursement.”

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, California, authorities declared Monkeypox a “local public health emergency”. Mayor London Breed said the risk of disease remained low, but the declaration going into effect on August 1 would help in the mobilisation of resources.

“San Francisco showed during COVID that early action is essential for protecting public health,” Breed said in a statement on Thursday. “We know that this virus impacts everyone equally – but we also know that those in our LGBTQ community are at greater risk right now.”

“A few weeks ago, the San Francisco Department of Public Health requested 35,000 vaccines to start to get at those most at risk for contracting the virus. So far, in the last three weeks, we’ve barely received a 1/3 of that request ... we are going to need far more than 35,000 vaccines to protect our LGBTQ community and to slow the spread of this virus.”

The United States has confirmed a total of 4,907 Monkeypox cases, of which 1,247 are in New York, and 261 cases have been diagnosed in San Francisco.

Monkeypox is a usually mild virus that causes fever as well as a distinctive bumpy rash. It spreads through close contact, and during this outbreak, experts say the virus has been detected in a disproportionate number of men who have sex with men. Monkeypox is not known to be a sexually transmitted virus, but sexual contact would constitute as close contact, one of the main routes by which the virus is known to spread.

Last week, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern,” a label that is designed to sound an alarm that a coordinated international response is needed and could unlock funding and global efforts to collaborate on sharing vaccines and treatments.

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