

Potential measles mass-spreader event at Newark Airport, latest sign of US transit and health infrastructure free fall

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Health officials from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed Wednesday that a measles-infected traveler passed through Newark Liberty International Airport's Terminal B between 12:30-4:00 p.m. on May 12, potentially exposing thousands of travelers to the highly contagious disease.

The public health emergency was the latest crisis to emerge at the airport, following several outages of vital equipment, which briefly left air traffic controllers blind. However, several incidents have occurred at airports across the country in recent days, pointing to the US air infrastructure on the brink of collapse.

There are currently no known additional cases of measles in New Jersey. The state's health department released a statement on May 15 that the patient was a non-resident visiting the state while infectious. As of this writing, the full travel information of the infected person has not been released.

That there are no known cases, however, does not mean that the virus has not spread. Both the New Jersey Department of Health and the CDC have warned that anyone who traveled through Newark at the time should be conscious of any flu-like symptoms acquired through June 2, as measles can show up to 21 days after exposure.

In addition, it is not clear how well the virus can be tracked, given the complete dismantling of the public health infrastructure, begun in Trump's first term, continued under Biden and now greatly accelerating in Trump's second term. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the American ruling elite actively shut down contact tracing and testing systems in order to spread the lie that the coronavirus pandemic had "ended."

The re-emergence of measles, which was declared eliminated in the US back in 2000, is a particularly ominous expression of this decline. Trump's head of

Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is an anti-science quack who regularly promotes anti-vaccine skepticism. He has played a critical role in the reduction of vaccination rates—including the safe and 97 percent effective MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine—among the US population.

If the country's population was properly vaccinated, it is very likely this case might never have existed nor would that outbreak in West Texas have occurred. Since being first reported in January, the Texas Department of State Health Services has confirmed 722 cases.

Alongside the failure of public health in the country, the breakdown of the aviation infrastructure continues apace.

On Monday, May 19, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) confirmed another brief radio outage at the Philadelphia facility that manages Newark traffic. Though officials claimed all aircraft "remained safely separated," this marks the fourth such outage since April 28.

On April 28, radar and communications went down for the Philadelphia Terminal Radar Approach Control facility (TRACON) for about 90 seconds. The confusion in the airspace prompted hundreds of delayed, diverted and canceled flights. In addition, several air traffic controllers took "trauma leave" after the first incident, citing the immense stress of being helpless with hundreds of lives on the line.

The mounting operational challenges have forced the FAA to cut Newark's hourly flight capacity by 20 percent—from more than 70 flights per hour to just 56 (28 arrivals and 28 departures)—until June 15, when daily runway construction is scheduled to end. Even after construction, reduced capacity at some level would continue through October 25.

The air transportation crisis extends beyond Newark.

At New York's LaGuardia Airport on May 6, passengers aboard a Republic Airways jet were violently thrown forward in their seats when pilots had to abort takeoff to avoid colliding with a United Airlines plane still taxiing across the runway. Passenger Renee Hoffer reported to the *Associated Press* that she was hospitalized the following day with a pinched nerve after experiencing a stop "as hard as any car accident I've been in."

This near-disaster occurred despite LaGuardia being equipped with the FAA's best runway incursion prevention technology. The system, known as ASDS-X, uses a slew of advanced technology to avoid such collisions. But it failed in this case, raising further questions about the efficacy of safety systems at even the best-equipped US airports.

Another runway incident occurred in February, when a Southwest Airlines flight narrowly avoided colliding with a private jet at Chicago Midway Airport by just 200 feet. The NTSB's preliminary report found confusion on the runway, with the private jet's crew believing they were approaching a different runway and failing to acknowledge ground control instructions to hold short.

In late March, a Delta Air Lines flight and four US Air Force T-38 Talon jets experienced a dangerous near-miss near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The incident occurred just two months after a devastating mid-air collision between an American Airlines flight and a Black Hawk helicopter near the same airport which claimed 67 lives.

Aviation experts have warned that these incidents reflect a system at its breaking point. "Our whole air traffic control system has been blinking red, screaming at us that we've got it overloaded," said Brian Alexander, a military helicopter pilot and aviation accident attorney, when he spoke with *Business Insider* about the incident.

The string of near-misses has been punctuated by actual collisions and fatal crashes. On May 17, two Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 planes collided while being pushed back from their gates at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. According to Alaska Airlines, ground service tugs were maneuvering both aircraft when their wings made contact. While no injuries occurred, the incident forced the cancellation of flights to Orange County, California, and Sacramento.

This followed a similar incident earlier this month when two United Airlines Boeing 777-300ER aircraft collided at San Francisco International Airport, forcing the cancellation of both trans-Pacific flights.

Tragically, two people were killed on May 17 when

their small plane crashed shortly after takeoff from Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport in Broomfield, Colorado. According to North Metro Fire Rescue District, the pilot was "trying to return to the airport due to an issue," when the plane went down in a field, causing a small grass fire.

And on May 19 in Prineville, Oregon, an 80-year-old man died and another person suffered serious injuries when their helicopter crashed near the Prineville Airport on Saturday morning.

The crisis in aviation safety extends globally. In Finland, five people died on May 17 when two helicopters collided in mid-air near Eura Airport in the southwestern part of the country. Both helicopters were destroyed in the collision, with the crash site of each located in a wooded area approximately 300 feet apart. Finnish authorities indicated the investigation could take up to a year to complete.

These incidents come amid growing concerns about air traffic congestion worldwide. According to a January report from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), there were more than 15,000 close calls between commercial airplanes and helicopters from October 2021 to December 2024.

At the same time, there is an extreme shortage of qualified air traffic controllers. At Newark, which is supposed to have 38 controllers, there are only 24 currently hired. Across the US, there are just 13,500 air traffic controllers.

These shortages are only exacerbated by the ongoing efforts by the Trump administration and the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which began firing hundreds of FAA safety workers on February 17. DOGE, led by oligarch Elon Musk, currently oversees the country's entire air traffic control systems.



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