



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Persons who may have had contact with rabid bat sought**

**Bat found at Santa Fe Dam Recreational Area in Irwindale**

LOS ANGELES – County health officials are seeking help from the community in locating anyone who may have touched or had contact with a bat found at the Santa Fe Dam Recreational Area in Irwindale on Saturday, June 9, 2012. The bat was found clinging to the side of a rock column inside the snack area near the boat and bike rental concession. A crowd of people, including children, were gathered around the bat for about 30 minutes before park officials intervened. The bat was captured and tested positive for rabies.

“It is very important that any individuals who touched or had contact with this bat contact our department. We can help determine if you will need to receive urgent rabies preventive treatment,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer.

Individuals who touched or may have had contact with the bat found at the Santa Fe Dam Recreational Area on June 9<sup>th</sup> should contact Public Health’s Acute Communicable Disease Control unit at (213) 240-7941 for evaluation.

Eleven rabid bats have been found in Los Angeles County so far this year, suggesting that the disease is increasing in bats. Although the vast majority of bats in nature do not have rabies, on average, about eight to 12 rabid bats are detected per year. Public health officials have not determined why there is an increase. Any contact with bats and other wild animals should be avoided, as it is not always possible to visually determine if an animal has rabies. A bite from a rabid animal could cause rabies infection in people or other animals.

“Bat bites can be undetectable as they have very small, very sharp teeth. No one should touch or handle bats found near or on the ground, and children should be taught to avoid touching bats or other wild animals,” said Dr. Fielding. “Make sure you maintain current rabies vaccines for your pets as well. If a bat may have bitten a person or a pet, contain the bat as safely as possible without touching it and contact your local animal control department. Individuals or pets who may have been bitten should seek immediate medical attention.”

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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