



For Immediate Release:

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First West Nile Virus Death Reported in LA County

Reminder to all residents to take precautions against mosquitoes

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Health Officer today confirmed the first human death of West Nile virus (WNV) infection in Los Angeles County this year. The fatality occurred in one older adult male, who lived in the South Bay area, had pre-existing health conditions and was hospitalized at the time of death. To date, 13 WNV infections have been documented, including 6 asymptomatic blood donors. Several agencies in Southern California, including the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD) and the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District, have been cautioning residents that this year is a particularly active year for mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus.

“While most people bitten by a mosquito are not exposed to West Nile virus, some individuals may become infected with this disease and may experience symptoms that can last for months, or even years, such as fatigue, malaise, and depression,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Taking a few simple precautions can greatly reduce the risk of mosquito bites, the primary pathway to human infection. West Nile can appear anywhere in Los Angeles County, or around the state, and we are urging people to take precautions, such as getting rid of pools of stagnant water around their homes, and using a repellent containing DEET when outdoors in mosquito prone areas, especially around dawn or dusk.”

In 2012, 174 human cases of WNV were reported in Los Angeles County, the second highest count documented since 2004. Of those who showed symptoms, 85% required hospitalization and 4% were fatal. As of July 30, 2013, WNV has been detected in 118 mosquito pools and 141 dead birds in Los Angeles County. Seventy-five percent of dead birds and nearly half of mosquitoes were found in the South Bay, but WNV activity has been found in other areas across Los Angeles County. The wide-ranging distribution of our human cases demonstrates that the virus can affect any location in the county. Persons over 50 years of age and those with immunocompromising medical conditions are at increased risk of serious WNV infection, neuroinvasive disease and death.

- **Dead birds may be reported by calling (877) 968-2473 or logging onto <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/disintro.htm>.**
- **Stagnant swimming pools or “green pools” should be reported to the Public Health Environmental Health Bureau at (626) 430-5200, or to a local vector control agency.**

About West Nile Virus:

- WNV is not spread through person-to-person contact or directly from birds to humans.
- Most mosquitoes do not carry the virus.
- In most cases, people who are infected with West Nile virus never become sick, or have only very mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and a mild skin rash.
- Symptoms of WNV could appear within three to 12 days after infection.



- Fewer than one in 150 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito become severely ill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In these rare cases, the virus can cause encephalitis and even death.
- People over 50 years of age and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk for developing severe symptoms, which may require hospitalization.
- Recovery from any infection with the virus can take months to years, and some individuals may never fully recover.
- There is no specific treatment for this disease.

Decrease risk of infection:

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus, when used as labeled, are effective defenses against mosquitoes.
- Check your window screens for holes.
- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito-eating fish. These eat mosquito eggs and larvae.
- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

More information:

- Information on West Nile Virus by phone: (800) 975-4448.
- Information on West Nile Virus on the web: <http://westnile.ca.gov/>

Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656

Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370

San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466

Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917

Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 933-5321

Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004

City of Long Beach Vector Control Program: (562) 570-4132

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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