



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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First Two California Fatalities From West Nile Virus in 2011

SACRAMENTO – A 37-year-old man and an 86-year-old man, both from Kern County, are the first reported fatalities from West Nile virus (WNV) this year, Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health, announced today

“These unfortunate deaths remind us of the potential danger from mosquito bites and West Nile virus,” Chapman said. To date in 2011, 88 human cases of WNV from 18 California counties have been reported. Last year 111 cases and six fatalities were reported.

WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. The risk of serious illness to most people is low. However, some individuals – less than 1 percent – will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. Individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms. Studies also show that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

Chapman said that the most effective way for individuals to prevent exposure to mosquito bites and West Nile virus is to remember the “Four D’s”:

1. **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep the mosquitoes from biting you. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
2. **DRESS** – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure to mosquito bites.
3. **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at this time. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.
4. **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish (available from your local mosquito and vector control agency) or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

California’s West Nile virus website includes the latest information on West Nile virus

activity in the state. Californians are encouraged to report all dead birds and dead tree squirrels on the Web site or by calling toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).

www.cdph.ca.gov

