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**Texas Department of State  
Health Services**

June 27, 2018

State Agency Heads:

Mosquito season is in full swing so we ask for your help to raise awareness about preventing the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses. We can take the actions outlined below and use our statewide reach to protect Texas communities from illnesses, such as Zika, West Nile, and dengue.

The risk of these diseases increases with mosquito activity in Texas' warm weather. Pregnant women are particularly at risk of Zika, because the virus can cause birth defects in unborn infants.

We can take the following actions to help prevent mosquito-borne illnesses:

1. **Share the enclosed prevention steps with staff and the public.** Give the enclosed flyers to staff and the public to educate our communities about steps to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. The same simple steps outlined there to prevent Zika will be effective against all similar types of illnesses.

[TexasZika.org](http://TexasZika.org) has free information and materials in English and Spanish that you can download or order in printed form. The Zika communications toolkit has newsletter copy, social media content, and more.

2. **Post information on your websites, social media platforms, and in your office buildings.** For website banners and other shareable graphics to post on your agency websites and social media platforms, visit [TexasZika.org](http://TexasZika.org). There are also free posters available for order that you can hang in common areas of your office building.
3. **Remove standing water where mosquitoes can breed.** Check for standing water around state buildings, near neighborhoods, and businesses.

Take action now to protect Texans. The Department of State Health Services has technical expertise to help your efforts to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. You can contact them by writing to [TexasZika@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:TexasZika@dshs.texas.gov).

Thank you for your leadership in this important public health matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Greg Abbott in black ink.

Greg Abbott  
Governor

Handwritten signature of John Hellerstedt in blue ink.

John Hellerstedt, M.D.  
Commissioner, DSHS

## **Zika Virus Protection and Prevention**

### **Measures for Individuals to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites**

- wear insect repellent,
- cover up with long-sleeved shirts and long pants,
- keep mosquitoes out with air conditioning or intact window screens, and
- limit outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

### **Measures for Individuals to Prevent Mosquito Breeding**

- At least weekly, carefully check the area around your home, school or workplace for mosquito breeding areas:
  - clear and empty gutters;
  - empty or get rid of cans, buckets, old tires, pots, plant saucers and other containers that hold water;
  - remove standing water around structures and from flat roofs;
  - change water in pet dishes daily;
  - rinse and scrub vases and other indoor water containers weekly;
  - change water in wading pools and bird baths several times a week;
  - maintain backyard pools or hot tubs;
  - cover trash containers;
  - water lawns and gardens carefully so water does not stand for several days;
  - screen rain barrels and openings to water tanks or cisterns; and
  - treat front and back door areas of homes with residual insecticides if mosquitoes are abundant nearby.
- If mosquito problems persist, consider pesticide applications for vegetation around the home.

### **Measures to Protect Communities from Zika Virus**

- conduct neighborhood outreach about active precautions individuals can take to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites;
- initiate or enhance monitoring and surveillance of mosquito activity;
- develop a local contingency plan for mosquito abatement and surveillance, and plan for additional control measures if needed;
- keep public drains and ditches clear of weeds and trash so water will not collect;
- implement efforts to clean up illegal dump sites and collect heavy trash; and
- encourage people to report illegal dumpsites and standing water, and respond quickly to these complaints.