



For Immediate Release

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## **Residents Need to Protect Themselves from Mosquitoes as They Head Outside Amidst Relaxing of Stay-at-Home Orders**

*National Mosquito Awareness Week educates residents about the importance of eliminating mosquitoes and preventing the spread of mosquito-borne diseases*

**SACRAMENTO, June 17, 2020** – As the weather heats up and residents head outside, [mosquito experts](#) encourage community members to protect themselves from mosquitoes and the diseases they can spread when they bite. West Nile virus is the most prevalent mosquito-borne disease in the U.S. according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), California had the highest number of West Nile virus disease cases in the nation in 2019, with 225 cases reported. Comparatively, Texas had 32 cases and Florida had two cases in 2019. There is no human vaccine for West Nile virus, a disease that can cause debilitating cases of meningitis, encephalitis, and even death.

However, West Nile virus isn't the only mosquito-borne threat in California. Newly established invasive *Aedes* mosquitoes can transmit viruses such as chikungunya, dengue, and Zika, all of which are costly to treat and can have long-term health and financial consequences. These mosquitoes are established in many areas of California and are steadily expanding their range.

“While COVID-19 is not transmitted by mosquitoes, infected mosquitoes pose other public health threats,” said Peter Bonkrude, president of the [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#) (MVCAC). “The best way to protect yourself from West Nile virus and other mosquito-transmitted diseases is to prevent mosquito bites. Wearing insect repellent is important as is eliminating all standing water which can create mosquito breeding sources.”

“While our attention has been laser focused on COVID-19 it's important to remember that there are other public health concerns such as West Nile virus,” said Assemblymember Mike Gipson (D-64). “As chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Infectious Diseases, I'm familiar with the devastating toll that mosquito-transmitted diseases can have and encourage all California residents to take simple steps to protect themselves.”

[National Mosquito Control Awareness Week](#), June 21-27, 2020, is a reminder to residents about the easy actions they can take to prevent mosquito breeding and protect themselves from mosquito bites. Mosquito experts are working to ensure there are adequate local, state, and federal resources to meet the increasing challenges of combating mosquito-borne diseases.

Specifically, at the federal level, MVCAC has been advocating for funding for the Strengthening Mosquito Abatement Safety and Health Act (SMASH Act) which would authorize CDC resources to be used to protect public health by addressing emerging infectious mosquito-borne diseases and improving existing mosquito control programs.

**To help prevent mosquito bites:**

- Apply insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients, including DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535, according to label instructions. Repellents keep mosquitoes from biting. It is important to follow EPA and CDC guidelines for the safe use of repellents on children.
- Dress in long sleeves and pants, especially if outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes that can spread West Nile virus are most active.
- Install screens on windows and doors and keep them in good repair to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including in flowerpots, old tires, buckets, pet dishes, and trash cans because mosquitoes lay their eggs in very small amounts of standing water.
- Repair leaking faucets and broken sprinklers.
- Clean rain gutters clogged with leaves.
- Report neglected swimming pools and day-biting mosquitoes to your local mosquito and vector control agency.

For more information check out these videos: [Tip, Toss & Take Action, Everyone Can Help Fight the Bite!](#), and [Mosquito Control is an Essential Service](#).

For additional information on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases please visit the [California Department of Public Health](#).

**About MVCAC**

The [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#) (MVCAC) is the statewide voice for mosquito and vector control professionals. The association provides public health information, expertise, mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance, innovative research, professional training, effective legislative and regulatory advocacy on behalf of California public agencies.