



Maricopa County

NEWS RELEASE

Department of
Public Health
4041 N. Central Ave.
Suite 1400
Phoenix, AZ 85012
Phone: 602-506-6900
Fax: 602-506-6885
[www.maricopa.gov/
public_health/](http://www.maricopa.gov/public_health/)

Contact: Jeanene Fowler, Public Health: 602-722-1806 (cell)
Johnny Diloné, Environmental Services: 602-525-2423 (cell)

Stars and Stripes and Mosquitoes ***Maricopa County Confirms First Human Case of*** ***West Nile Virus for 2009***

Phoenix (July 1, 2009) – The 2009 West Nile Virus season has started here in Arizona. Today, the Maricopa County Department of Public Health and Arizona Department of Health Services confirmed that a woman in her 40's is the state's first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) this season. The woman has been released from a local Valley hospital and is currently recovering from the virus.

"With the Independence Day holiday upon us, this first case is a reminder of the precautions we should all be taking this weekend," said Dr. Bob England, director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

Public health officials recommend applying insect repellent following label instructions (CDC recommends repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus or PMD, or IR3535), wearing long clothing, and avoiding outdoor activity after dusk and before dawn. Also, residents should make a special effort to mosquito-proof their home by taking the following precautions:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around your property. Drain standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Keep fountains, animal troughs and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris.

And, this year's case shows mosquito surveillance is working.

"This year mosquitoes positive for West Nile virus were discovered before we confirmed our first human case," said John Kolman, interim director for the Maricopa County Department of Environmental Services. "This shows us that our surveillance is working.

"It's crucial that people do their part in helping us prevent the spread of the virus by reporting to our department any mosquito problems, green pools, or standing water, and by working with their neighbors to get rid of mosquito breeding areas on their property," added Kolman.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with the virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite.

Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms, such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, and even death. People over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

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Health officials say Valley residents should be aware that although the majority of people who become infected with the virus will show no symptoms at all, for a small percentage of people it can be serious or even fatal.

This is the first laboratory confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection in Maricopa County and statewide this year. It is the third case of the disease in the United States.

Maricopa County and the Arizona Department of Health Services continue to have an enhanced surveillance program, which includes sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

For more information on West Nile virus, public health assistance, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, call (602) 506-0700 or visit www.WestNileAZ.org or www.maricopa.gov/wnv.

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