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FLORIDA HEALTH REMINDS RESIDENTS TO DRAIN AND COVER TO PROTECT FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS

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Tallahassee, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health reminds residents and visitors that it is important to "Drain and Cover" this National Mosquito Control Awareness Week. The Department encourages everyone to take simple precautions to protect themselves and their neighbors from mosquito-borne illnesses which have received increased attention recently in Florida.

"While there is currently no active, ongoing transmission of Zika in Florida, residents and travelers should always take precautions to protect against mosquito bites," said State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip. "Zika is one of several mosquito-borne illnesses that occur in Florida, so be sure to drain water from any containers around your home, cover your skin with clothing and mosquito repellent and cover doors and windows with screen to keep mosquitoes out of your home or business."

T. Wayne Gale, President of the Florida Mosquito Control Association said, "Summer is a crucial time to protect yourself and your loved ones from mosquitoes. Mosquito surveillance and control happens year-round in Florida, but the hotter, wetter months produce ideal conditions for disease-spreading mosquitoes, so be sure to lessen your risk of being bitten and eliminate potential breeding sites."

In addition to Zika, Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus, West Nile virus (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) virus are also present in mosquitoes in Florida. The risk of disease transmission through bites of infected mosquitoes to humans has increased.

To protect against mosquitoes, the department urges the public to "Drain and Cover:"

DRAIN standing water:

- Drain water from garbage cans, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flowerpots or any other containers where sprinkler or rainwater has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER your skin with:

- CLOTHING - If you must be outside when mosquitoes are active, cover up. Wear shoes, socks, long pants and long sleeves.
- REPELLENT - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with 10-30 percent DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535 are effective.
- Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.

COVER doors and windows with screens:

- Keep mosquitoes out of your house. Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches and patios.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites:

- Clean out troughs and gutters;
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain;
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots;
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups;
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water;
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week;
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week; and
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

The department has created a public service announcement on the "Drain and Cover" method, which you can view here.

Click here for our downloadable poster on preventing mosquito bites.

For more information on mosquito-borne illness prevention, visit our website.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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