



West Nile Virus

There is no doubt that this spring we have seen an abnormal amount of rain. The exposure to West Nile Virus (WNV) that is transmitted by infected mosquitoes will be at an all time high. Mosquito population increases with the amount of stagnant or standing water that is available for them to breed in. Most WNV infections occur from July through September. Now is the time as an employer to take proactive steps to protect employees who work outdoors on a regular basis from the West Nile Virus.

When someone is infected with West Nile virus (WNV), they will typically have one of three outcomes: No symptoms (80%), West Nile fever (WNF in about 20% of people), or severe West Nile disease, such as meningitis or encephalitis (less than 1% of those who get infected). If you develop a high fever with severe headache, consult your health care provider.

Symptoms

West Nile fever is characterized by symptoms such as fever, body aches, headache and sometimes swollen lymph glands and rash. West Nile fever generally lasts only a few days, though in some cases symptoms have been reported to last longer, even up to several weeks. West Nile fever does not appear to cause any permanent health effects. There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. People with West Nile fever recover on their own, though symptoms can be relieved through various treatments (such as medication for headache and body aches, etc.). Most WNV infections occur from July through September.

Where are mosquitoes most commonly found?

Mosquitoes develop in any standing body of water that persists for more than 4 days. Stagnant pools, ponds, watering troughs, irrigation ditches, rain barrels, manure lagoons, and other stagnant bodies of water increase mosquito populations. Weedy, bushy, and wooded work environments may also have mosquito populations. Emptying containers of stagnant water every 4 to 5 days or treating these breeding sites with larvicides can help to reduce mosquito populations. Used dismounted tires provide excellent breeding sites for mosquitoes.

As an employer what can be done to help protect the employees that work in outdoor environments?

- Provide training that describes how WNV is transmitted and reinforces knowledge about the risks of WNV exposure and infection.
- Stress to workers the importance of reporting all work-related injuries and illnesses in a timely manner.
- Provide a medical surveillance system that monitors, records, and assesses the symptoms and absenteeism associated with WNV infection.
- Provide workers with protective clothing (long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks) and repellents to use on skin and clothing.
- Use repellents containing DEET (more than 20% DEET for longer protection), picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on both skin and clothing.

Reduce employee exposure to mosquitoes by taking the following steps:

- Avoid having workers outdoors when mosquitoes are most active and biting (most often from dusk to dawn).
- Recommend that outdoor workers wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks when possible.
- If worker uniforms are provided, include long-sleeved shirts and long pants as options.
- Eliminate as many sources of standing water from the worksite as possible to decrease mosquito populations.
- Remove discarded tires or keep them dry and under cover.
- Place drain holes in containers that collect water and cannot be discarded.
- Turn over, cover, store, or remove equipment such as tarps, buckets, barrels, wheelbarrows, and containers to prevent standing water.
- Clean out rain gutters.

NEWS

FMCSA EXTENDS COMMENT DEADLINE ON CDL LEARNER'S PERMIT PROPOSAL

The FMCSA has extended the deadline for comments on its proposal to require a learner's permit for applicants for a Commercial Driver's License for an additional 30 days. Comments are now due on July 9, 2008. 73 Federal Register 32520 (June 9, 2008). The original notice of proposed rulemaking was published in the Federal Register on April 9, 2008.

DOT FINAL RULES EXPECTED BY NOVEMBER 1, 2008

Due to the White House directive that all federal agencies issue any substantive final rules for this year by November 1, 2008, there are now a number of pending rulemakings that could be completed by that date. The FMCSA has indicated that it wants to issue final rules by November 1 on driver hours of service (to replace the current interim final rule), electronic on-board recording devices, entry-level CDL driver training, and CDL driver learner's permits.

Similarly, PHMSA has indicated that it intends to issue final rules by November 1, 2008 on cargo tank and cylinder issues (HM-218E) and emergency response telephone numbers (HM-206F).