



Maricopa County

News Release

**Environmental Services
Department**
1001 N. Central Avenue
Suite 401
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: 602-506-6611
TDD: 602-372-0622
Fax: 602-506-1874
esd.maricopa.gov

For additional information: Johnny Diloné, Public Information Officer
Environmental Services Department
Office: 602-506-6611
Cell: 602-525-2423

Julie Pasquinelli, Public Information Assistant
Office: 602-506-0386

May 24, 2013

Memorial Day Weekend is here Whether you're commemorating our heroes or simply enjoying the outdoors, avoid being a mosquito magnet!

Maricopa County residents will be out this weekend honoring the brave men and women who have died for our country and freedoms. While many may be outdoors participating in the different events and ceremonies, or simply enjoying the warm weather, it is important to protect our families and ourselves from mosquitoes. Maricopa County Environmental Services Department would like to remind people to take precautions against West Nile virus (WNV).

"Prevention is the best tool we have," said John Kolman, Director of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "We need to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and also prevent mosquitoes from breeding," Kolman added.

So far this year, Maricopa County Environmental Services department has confirmed 8 WNV positive mosquito samples. The department conducts year-round surveillance of mosquitoes: more than 700 mosquito traps are set throughout the county.

"The more we can control our mosquito population, the more we can control this virus," said John Townsend, Environmental Services Department Vector Control Division manager. "This is why it is very important that we all do our part and prevent mosquitoes from breeding in our yards and neighborhoods," said Townsend.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis or even death. Persons 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.

So far this year, Maricopa County Department of Public Health has not received laboratory-confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection. In 2004, Maricopa County led the nation's counties with 355 people infected with West Nile virus; 14 people died from the disease in Maricopa County.

Take these precautions to prevent WNV infection:

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- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires, bird baths and other containers where water may collect
- Remove unnecessary clutter
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home
- Make sure pools and decorative ponds are properly maintained and operational

“After you’ve mosquito proofed your home, work with your neighbors to clean up their yards,” Townsend recommended.

Wherever you may be this weekend, bring your insect repellent along and follow label instructions, especially for use on children. Share your insect repellent with those around you. Additionally:

- Wear light colored clothing with long sleeves and pants
- If possible, avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active
- Use protective clothing and insect repellent when exposure to mosquitoes cannot be avoided

For more information on West Nile virus, to set-up an appointment to obtain mosquito eating fish at no cost to you, to report green pools, file any mosquito related complaint, register on the Fogging Notification System or for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, please call the West Nile Virus General Information and Help Line at (602) 506-0700, or visit <http://www.maricopa.gov/wnv>.

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For more than 50 years, Maricopa County Environmental Services department has been working with our community to ensure a safe and healthy environment. The department serves the nation’s fourth largest county with a population of nearly 4 million people. Using innovative methods, our Environmental Health professionals take proactive steps to regulate the food safety in eating and drinking establishments, work with stakeholders to keep our water supply free from contamination, and provide surveillance/enforcement activities to help minimize vector borne health risks.

*To find out more, visit esd.maricopa.gov or call (602) 506-6616. Follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/mcenviro>
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