

## **\*\*CSRMA ALERT\*\***

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### **West Nile Virus Now Striking in California**

From CalOSHA Reporter – Vol. 31 No. 32 –

	Summary of West Nile Virus Activity in California July 2004							
	Imperial	Los Angeles	Orange	Riverside	San Bernardino	Kern	Ventura	State Total
Humans	0	8	0	4	20	0	0	32
Horses	0	0	0	19	7	0	0	26
Birds	0	445	32	112	283	1	2	875
Sentinel Chickens	11	15	0	32	17	0	0	75
Mosquito Pools	18	41	7	65	38	2	0	171

Source: California Department of Health Services

The West Nile virus has arrived in California. The disease, which appeared in New York in 1999 and has steadily been making its way west ever since, has claimed the lives of two Southern California men in recent months. At least 70 Californians have tested positive for the virus, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, and the virus has been detected as far north as Mendocino, Butte and Tehama counties.

In all, West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in 20 California counties as of Aug. 2. (For daily updates, see [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov).)

Public health officials emphasize that the risk of serious illness is low for most people, and most who are infected will not experience any illness. The two men who died were among the 1 percent of infected individuals who develop serious neurologic illnesses such as encephalitis and meningitis.

When someone is infected with WNV, he or she will typically have one of three outcomes: no symptoms (about 80 percent of cases); West Nile fever (about 20 percent), which causes a temperature, headache, rashes and swollen lymph glands; or West Nile encephalitis and meningitis (less than 1 percent), which results in inflammation of the brain, and in the case of meningitis, also the spinal cord. In 2002 and 2003 there were 457 fatalities from the virus in the United States.

The virus is transmitted mostly through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes contract the virus from feeding on infected birds.

For outdoor workers, the most effective method of avoiding infection is avoiding mosquitoes, many of which feed from dusk to dawn. But some are active during the day, especially in weedy, brushy, wooded or shady areas. Protective measures include wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks, and use of an insect repellent, such as DEET.

Mosquitoes can breed in stagnant water that has been standing for more than four days, so employers should drain items that hold water, such as tires, tarps, buckets and barrels.

Please visit the Center for Disease Control's West Nile virus website to learn more about the virus and infection prevention strategies → <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/westnile/>

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