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**Texas Department of State  
Health Services**

July 2, 2018

County Judges and Mayors:

Thank you for your continued efforts to safeguard your communities against Zika virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses like West Nile and dengue. With the ongoing risk posed by these illnesses, we are asking for your help to promote mosquito bite precautions and take action to reduce mosquito breeding grounds in your community.

The risk of these diseases increases with mosquito activity in Texas' warm weather. Pregnant women are particularly at risk of Zika, because the virus can cause birth defects in unborn infants.

Your role as a leader places you at the forefront of protecting your community. Please lead in organizing activities such as those listed below for your local community:

- Coordinate community clean-up of areas that collect water and allow mosquitos to breed around homes and public areas.
- Host, or have volunteers host, events for stakeholders to answer questions, demonstrate clean-up, and share educational materials.
- Coordinate neighborhood outreach about things people can do to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites.
- Start or enhance mosquito surveillance and abatement efforts, including use of larvicide.

We are coordinating with local health departments across the state to plan for and respond to Zika and other mosquito-borne illnesses. You can help protect Texans by promoting important prevention messages.

[TexasZika.org](http://TexasZika.org) has free information and materials available in English and Spanish. The Zika communications toolkit found there has information you can use to educate your communities about preventing mosquito bites. Steps to prevent Zika also reduce the spread of other illnesses. The attached document lists measures to protect people against mosquito bites.

The Department of State Health Services has technical expertise to help your efforts to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. You can contact the agency by writing to [TexasZika@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:TexasZika@dshs.texas.gov). Thank you for your help with this important public health matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Greg Abbott in black ink.

Greg Abbott  
Governor

Handwritten signature of John Hellerstedt in blue ink.

John Hellerstedt, M.D.  
Commissioner, DSHS

## **Zika Virus Protection and Prevention**

### **Measures for Individuals to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites**

- wear insect repellent,
- cover up with long-sleeved shirts and long pants,
- keep mosquitoes out with air conditioning or intact window screens, and
- limit outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

### **Measures for Individuals to Prevent Mosquito Breeding**

- At least weekly, carefully check the area around your home, school, or workplace for mosquito breeding areas:
  - clear and empty gutters;
  - empty or get rid of cans, buckets, old tires, pots, plant saucers, and other containers that hold water;
  - remove standing water around structures and from flat roofs;
  - change water in pet dishes daily;
  - rinse and scrub vases and other indoor water containers weekly;
  - change water in wading pools and bird baths several times a week;
  - maintain backyard pools or hot tubs;
  - cover trash containers;
  - water lawns and gardens carefully so water does not stand for several days;
  - screen rain barrels and openings to water tanks or cisterns; and
  - treat front and back door areas of homes with residual insecticides if mosquitoes are abundant nearby.
- If mosquito problems persist, consider pesticide applications for vegetation around the home.

### **Measures to Protect Communities from Zika Virus**

- conduct neighborhood outreach about active precautions individuals can take to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites;
- initiate or enhance monitoring and surveillance of mosquito activity;
- develop a local contingency plan for mosquito abatement and surveillance, and plan for additional control measures if needed;
- keep public drains and ditches clear of weeds and trash so water will not collect;
- implement efforts to clean up illegal dump sites and collect heavy trash; and
- encourage people to report illegal dumpsites and standing water, and respond quickly to these complaints.