

Dengue Cases Hit Record High in Puerto Rico, Prompting Health Emergency

Over 500 cases reported, with significant hospitalizations in the capital, San Juan

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“This year, cases of dengue have surpassed historical records,” said Puerto Rico’s Health Secretary Carlos Mellado López, as officials announced over 500 cases of the viral disease across the territory. Almost half of these are in the capital of San Juan, with more than 340 people needing to be hospitalized.

Puerto Rico is just one of several countries suffering a major outbreak of dengue this year; Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay have all reported sharp spikes. In 2022, local officials warned that the USVI was [just about due](#) for an outbreak of its own, with the last such surge occurring in 2012.

Climate change is being blamed for the increase of dengue in the Americas. Higher rainfall and warmer temperatures are encouraging the growth of larger and larger populations of *aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which are largely responsible for spreading the dengue, chikungunya, and zika viruses. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “warmer temperatures associated with climate change can accelerate mosquito development, biting rates, and the incubation of the disease within a mosquito.”

On Monday, the Puerto Rico Department of Health declared a public health emergency in the island commonwealth. “Teams have been working on the integrated plan for prevention and control in response to arbovirus and we are going to expand the implemented response,” Mr. López declared.

The U.S. territory, with 549 cases currently, has recorded over 40 percent of 2023's entire total on the island.

Dengue causes symptoms including nausea, vomiting, rash and body pains in muscles and joints. Those who have had a previous infection have a higher risk of developing a more severe case, which can become “life-threatening within a few hours,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mr. López urged residents to “take immediate and proactive measures to control the spread of the virus and protect themselves and their families.”