

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Zika Infects 19 In Puerto Rico; Over 2,100 Pregnant Colombian Women

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ST. CROIX -- The local government said on Friday that it would do its best to curtail the rise of the Zika virus in the territory, which has so far reported only one confirmed case. But the islands' next door neighbor, Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth with about 3.5 million people, hasn't been fearing too well, and health officials there say they are "very concerned" about the virus, which has infected 19 residents so far.

"We're very concerned. We know that vector-end control is extremely difficult and diseases transmitted by mosquitoes are more so. So it's critical that the population do everything in their power to eliminate breeding sites around their homes. Because we know *Aedes aegypti*, it's a very urban mosquito, it likes to dwell inside your home. So you

have to do everything possible to eliminate breeding sites within your home," said Dr. Brenda Rivera-García, the territorial epidemiologist with the Department of Health in Puerto Rico in [an interview](#) with National Public Radio (NPR).

In Colombia, another country hit hard by the disease, more than 2,100 pregnant women are infected with the mosquito-borne Zika virus, the country's national health institute said on Saturday.

Officials from the World Health Organization said on Thursday that the Zika virus is "spreading explosively" in the Americas and announced that they would convene an emergency meeting on Monday to decide whether to declare a public health emergency.

"The level of alarm is extremely high," said Margaret Chan, the director general of the W.H.O., in a speech in Geneva.

In a [Tuesday alert](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned pregnant Americans or those wanting to become pregnant against traveling to the U.S. Virgin Islands, approximately one week after the first Zika case was [confirmed](#) on St. Croix.

In a press release Government House issued on Friday, Governor Kenneth Mapp said he directed the mobilization of a multi-agency team led by Department of Health to combat Zika.

Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Michelle Davis, an expert epidemiologist and regional health administrator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has been in constant contact with the Center for Disease Control and monitoring World Health Organization reports since learning of the potential threat to the Virgin Islands, according to the release.

"We are extremely fortunate to have the assistance and leadership of Dr. Davis, who is a true expert in this area," the governor said.

Dr. Davis added: "We are working diligently to prepare and protect the territory. I am appreciative of the assistance of the CDC with the diagnostics and educational materials. I will be continuing to work with the CDC in the event of further developments."