

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Health Confirms Two New Cases Of Zika In V.I., Bringing Total To Six

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Health on Tuesday confirmed two new cases of Zika virus in the Virgin Islands, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 6. According to D.O.H., all confirmed cases so far have been on St. Croix.

The new count is not unexpected, health officials say, telling The Consortium in an interview last month that they had expected the number to increase.

The department also confirmed four new cases of dengue, bringing the total for 2016 to 7. There have not been any cases of dengue in the territory since January 2015, when there were 19 suspected and 3 laboratory confirmed as probable cases. Due to the

increase in dengue cases, D.O.H. said it will begin reporting dengue cases as well as Zika cases each Tuesday, according to D.O.H.

These cases of dengue highlight the importance of mosquito control efforts in the Virgin Islands, according health officials. The mosquito that spreads dengue also spreads chikungunya and the Zika virus.

The best way to prevent the diseases' spread by mosquitoes is to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites, D.O.H. advised. Following recent rains in territory, D.O.H. is urging residents to check their property for standing water, where mosquitoes can breed, and repair window screens. The department also urged residents to eliminate any standing water in and around their homes, as well as taking the following preventive steps:

- Empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, or trash containers. Check inside and outside your home.
- Tightly cover water storage containers (buckets, cisterns, rain barrels) so that mosquitoes cannot get inside to lay eggs.
- For containers without lids, use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.

Last Tuesday, U.S. health officials said they were investigating 14 new reports of the Zika virus possibly being transmitted by sex, including two pregnant women. If confirmed, the unexpectedly high number would have major implications for controlling the virus, which is usually spread by mosquito bites.