

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Department Of Health To Launch Mosquito Control Program Aimed At Reducing Zika Cases

Health / **Published On March 17, 2016 11:22 PM /**

Staff **March 17, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) awarded an initial 90-day emergency contract to implement the U.S.V.I. vector control plan, an important part of the territory's response to Zika, Department of Health (D.O.H.) said late Thursday.

[Vector Disease Control International](#) (V.D.C.I.) was selected by C.D.C. as part of a national vector control contract to carry out mosquito control programs in U.S. states and territories to aid in the control of Zika virus. The territory's residents can expect to see V.D.C.I. crews out in the community beginning on Monday, March 21. V.D.C.I. will be hiring and training a small number of local staff; individuals interested in applying should

call 340-626-1676.

“USVI’s mosquito control efforts are focusing on pregnant women as the highest risk population, because a woman can pass Zika virus to her fetus during pregnancy. Zika infection during pregnancy has been linked to microcephaly, a severe birth defect that is a sign of incomplete brain development. We want to protect as many pregnant women as possible” stated Commissioner Nominee, Dr. Michelle Davis.

The mosquito that spreads Zika, *Aedes aegypti*, uses natural and artificial water-holding containers such as buckets, used tires, plastic containers, and clogged gutters to lay their eggs. Therefore, during the first 30 days, V.D.C.I. will focus on reducing mosquito breeding sources by discarding or draining sources of standing water, and application of larvacide to kill mosquitoes in areas of high risk, according to D.O.H. Mosquito control efforts will take place in and around the homes of pregnant women, as well as local schools, hospitals and areas with historical clusters of both dengue and chikungunya. This is because the mosquito that spreads Zika virus also spreads dengue and chikungunya.

V.D.C.I. crews may apply larvacide if mosquito larvae are found on the property during an initial property assessment visit. Larvacide will be applied either by hand, or by backpack application. The larvacide that will be used in U.S.V.I. is Vectobac WDG, a naturally occurring bacteria that lives in soil, and kills mosquitoes and black fly larvae in standing water. The bacteria has been registered for use in pesticides by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) since 1961. It is not harmful to pets, children, and is safe for pregnant women.

“The Department of Health, in consultation with federal, state/territory, and contract partners, has begun a review of all available vector control methods under consideration for protection from Zika. Emergency tools under consideration by federal, state, and other territories include application of larvacide, adulticides, and residual insecticide spraying. The DOH will complete this review within 30 days and provide a recommendation for investigation of additional methods to be included in future integrated pest management activities,” said D.O.E. Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Jones.

Vector Disease Control International’s work, under the initial 90-day contract with C.D.C., will be focused on covering only the highest risk areas with high risk populations, specifically pregnant women. Residents concerned about mosquitoes on their properties should call the Department of Health’s Zika Emergency Operations Center at 340-712-6205 to contact the Environmental Health Office.

For local information about Zika virus, call the Department of Health Emergency Operations Center at (340) 712-6205. For more general information about the Zika virus call toll free: 1-800-CDC-INFO.