

The Virgin Islands Consortium

D.O.H. Ramps Up Fight Against Zika As Cases Increase

Health / **Published On August 03, 2016 12:23 PM /**

Staff **August 03, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Department of Health on Tuesday announced that it would increase its efforts to fight the spread of the Zika virus in the territory.

D.O.H. made known via press release that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) had approved a D.O.H. request to increase vector control efforts in the islands.

D.O.H. will now conduct a comprehensive mosquito vector control program in both districts to include public areas, according to the release. Expanded mosquito control services for the general public will include inspection and treatment of all hospitals, clinics, schools, churches, and daycare centers requesting service in the territory.

Mosquito control will also be directed to public places with a history of related mosquito-borne diseases, such as Dengue and Chikungunya. Mosquito control teams will inspect and treat any public site, including empty lots, abandoned swimming pools, or construction sites that may be posing a mosquito problem.

The public is encouraged to assist in these efforts by reporting suspected locations to the D.O.H. Zika Emergency Operations Center at (340) 712-6205.

[Yesterday](#), the department said the territory saw 14 new cases of the Zika virus this week, a high number that brings the islands' total known cases to 79 — 20 in St. Croix, 58 in St. Thomas, and 1 in St. John.

"The Virgin Islands is in the midst of a significant outbreak and we are doing everything possible to get to the root of the issue by reducing the mosquito population and transmission of mosquito-borne diseases such as Zika in the territory," said Health Commissioner Michelle Davis. "The C.D.C. award is very timely, and will assist the DOH in implementing its comprehensive Zika prevention plan, including education, outreach communication and surveillance."

According to D.O.H., C.D.C. has contracted Vector Disease Control International (V.D.C.I.) to conduct mosquito control activities in the U.S. Virgin Islands. V.D.C.I. has been a partner with D.O.H. providing vector control services for the community since March.

Under the new 1-year contract, mosquito control efforts will be expanded. Control efforts will include locating and emptying containers that hold water and may produce mosquitoes. Non-potable water containers, which cannot be emptied of water, will be treated using a safe and natural biological larvicide that kills immature mosquito larvae that develop in water. V.D.C.I. is also in the process of hiring and training up to a dozen local residents. Individuals interested in applying should call V.D.C.I. directly, at 340-626-1668.

And D.O.H. urged the public to help control mosquito populations around their homes and neighborhoods by emptying, scrubbing, turning over, covering or throwing out containers that hold water such as flowerpot saucers and buckets; ensuring cisterns and water barrels are covered with lids or wire mesh with holes smaller than adult mosquitoes -- in addition to installing or repairing window and door screens.

Residents are also advised to help prevent mosquito bites by wearing protective clothing (long sleeves and pants) and to use E.P.A. registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or para-methane-diol.

Residents with questions or concerns about Zika should call D.O.H.'s Zika Emergency Operations Center at 340-712-6205. For more general information about Zika call toll free: 1-800-CDC-INFO.