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**MDHHS urges residents to “Fight the Bite” during the holiday weekend**  
*Mosquito pools collected in Saginaw County test positive for West Nile virus*

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding residents to take preventive measures to protect against mosquito bites during the holiday weekend. West Nile virus (WNV) has been identified in mosquitoes in Saginaw County this week, which is the earliest detection of West Nile activity in Michigan in several years.

Two mosquito pools collected in mid-June by the Saginaw County Mosquito Abatement Commission tested positive for WNV at Michigan State University. These findings confirm that the virus is circulating in mosquitoes in the state and presents a clear risk to human health.

“Adults who are 50 and older have the highest risk of illness caused by West Nile virus. People who work in outdoor occupations such as landscaping and construction are at increased risk of getting bitten by an infected mosquito,” says Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive of the MDHHS. “One bite from an infected mosquito can lead to a severe and possibly life-altering illness. Prevention is the key to protection.”

Due to a warm spring and unusually hot and dry early summer, mosquitoes that can transmit WNV are on the rise in Michigan. West Nile virus can cause serious neurological illnesses, such as meningitis and encephalitis. Weather conditions in Michigan this summer are similar to previous WNV outbreak years in 2002 and 2012, when hundreds of people were hospitalized due to infection. Last year, WNV was responsible for 18 serious illnesses and two fatalities in Michigan. Additionally, there were 2,060 WNV cases and 119 deaths in the United States reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2015.

“Hot and dry conditions favor development of the virus and the mosquitoes that transmit it,” says Erik Foster, Medical Entomologist at MDHHS. “These mosquitoes may breed near people’s homes in storm drains, shallow ditches, retention ponds, and unused pools. When these areas are not flushed out by rains, it becomes stagnant and highly organic, which is appealing to the mosquitoes that transmit the disease.”

During the upcoming holiday when people spend more time outdoors, it's especially important to take precautions against mosquito bites. While activity has been detected in only one county so far, all Michigan residents should follow simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their loved ones. In particular, citizens are advised to use mosquito repellent products according to label directions, and to use repellents containing EPA-registered active ingredients, such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Residents should always use insect repellent according to label directions. Draining

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standing water, and making sure door and window screens are in good repair will also help keep mosquitoes out of the home.

For up to date information about WNV in Michigan and to report sick or dead birds, an early indicator of WNV activity in a community, visit: [www.michigan.gov/westnile](http://www.michigan.gov/westnile). Additional information can be found at the CDC's web site [www.cdc.gov/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile).

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