

Health Matters



from the Kane County Health Department

— February 18, 2016 —

Trending Matters:

February is



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Working with our partners to prepare for Zika Virus

By now everybody has heard of the Zika Virus and its spread in Central and South America. We know that it is contracted mostly through the bite of a mosquito. Despite the fact that mosquito season is still months away, the Kane County Health Department has begun to plan in the event we start to see the disease spreading in our area. KCHD has begun regular meetings with its partners to prepare. This includes conference calls with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Kane County hospitals and medical providers, as well as meetings with our Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium partners.

The Health Department has established a dedicated Zika Virus Web page with links to the CDC and IDPH pages that are automatically updated. You can visit the page [here](#).

On a conference call on Feb. 16, IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D., updated the statewide case count to a total of four. All four cases contracted the illness during travel in Central or South America. Dr. Shah further indicated that the mosquitoes known to carry the disease, the Aedes species, are rarely found in Illinois, their eggs cannot survive the winters here. Because of this Dr. Shah said right now it is believed there is a low risk of significant spread of the illness in Illinois.



Aedes mosquito

The concern now is for travelers and for pregnant women and those women who plan to become pregnant. The latest guidance from the CDC says that pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. You can learn more about where the disease is circulating [here](#).



If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during your trip. The Zika Virus may be transmitted to the fetus during pregnancy and it has been reported to be transmitted through sexual contact. People planning Spring Break trips to the affected areas should follow mosquito bite prevention

precautions, such as using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and sleeping in air conditioned rooms or rooms with intact screens.

Common symptoms of Zika Virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

Due to the rapidly changing nature of the situation, we encourage all residents to regularly check health and travel advisories on our Web site [Zika page](#), or from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [Illinois Department of Public Health](#).

Emergency planning calls for coordination

Kane County participates in Receiving and Distribution Site (RDS) exercise.



At the Receiving and Distribution Site exercise, left to right: Kane County Sheriff Donald Kramer, Chief Deputy Thomas Baumgartner, KCHD Emergency Response Coordinator Jennifer Fearday, Office of Emergency Management Director Don Bryant, Lt. Chris Collins, and Office of Emergency Management Deputy Director Sean Madison.

The Kane County Division of Transportation, the Kane County Sheriff's Office, the Kane County Office of Emergency Management, and the Health Department earlier this month partnered in a public health emergency medicine distribution drill. Preparing for the worst-case scenario is part of the job, and the drill on Feb. 4 showed how well county departments and offices can and will work together during a public health threat.

Convening at the Sheriff's Office and "establishing" a Receiving and Distribution Site (RDS), the teams followed the procedures that would be required to distribute large quantities of medicine to the public at Points of Dispensing (PODs) throughout the county in an emergency. Through the RDS each designated group picks up its medicine and brings it back to the setup PODS as part of that drill.

Procedures that were tested during the drill included how the shipment from the Strategic National Stockpile would be received; how to best use the space available in terms of loading and unloading supplies; how to ensure that the distribution of

medical supplies was efficient; and determining what additional equipment if any were needed.

The drill was good preparation for the statewide, full scale exercise coming in June 2016 where we will test our capabilities to establish the RDS and PODs.

More information about emergency preparedness is available on our Web site [here](#).



Kane County Health Department staff participating in the RDS exercise are, left to right: Austin Schramer, Juan Magana, Neal Molnar, and Maria Pergi.

Prestigious journal publishes KCHD article



Illinois Pediatrician, the quarterly publication of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, published an article in its Winter 2015/2016 issue written by Director of Health Promotion Theresa Heaton and Communications Coordinator Tom Schlueter outlining the risks of radon poisoning. Titled *Make Radon Risk Prevention 'Just What the Doctor Ordered' in Pediatrics*, the article was published in January during National Radon Action Month.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after tobacco use. The article says that: "Pediatricians are critical partners in protecting children and their parents from Radon gas." It goes on to note that the Health Department and its partners, through the Kane County Healthy Places Coalition Call to Action, list several steps pediatricians can take to promote radon awareness among the parents of their patients. Among the recommendations are the promotion of the testing of their homes for radon gas, and the installing of mitigation systems if their test levels show high levels of radon gas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency states that action should be taken if levels are found to be greater than four picocuries per liter (pCi/L). The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) reports that the average radon level in Kane County homes is 4.09 pCi/L.

A list of certified professional testing firms is available [here](#). The article also hopes to ensure doctors inform parents that child care centers are now required by Illinois law to test for radon each time they renew their child care licensure, and also post the results of those tests.

Further, parents are recommended to have any home they plan to purchase tested for radon gas as part of any pre-sale inspection



process. The article heightened understanding of the risks of radon poisoning and increased the awareness of the Health Department.

More information about the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is available [here](#). More info on radon is available on the KCHD Web site [here](#).



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