



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Zika Case Investigation in City of McAllen

(McALLEN, TX) Officials with the Hidalgo County Health Department as well as the City of McAllen Health and Code Enforcement Department announced today that they are currently investigating a Zika case in the city of McAllen.

"I want to reassure the citizens of McAllen that we've got the very finest in terms of local and county experts working closely together to assist in this process," said City of McAllen Mayor Jim Darling. "I've been working with our team, and can assure our community that we've got a great partnership working on this investigation in the most expedient way possible, to keep all of our residents and visitors safe."

On Wednesday, February 22, 2017, the case was reported to the Hidalgo County Health Department. Private lab testing has confirmed a positive test for the Zika virus.

As of Friday, February 24, 2017, no travel history has been established outside of Hidalgo County, and because Zika can be transmitted by mosquitos or through sexual contact. Further investigation will be needed in an effort to determine how exposure occurred and information on the exposure history is still being collected.

"The health and safety of Hidalgo County families and visitors is a top priority. Since the first initial reports of travel-related Zika in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico and Cameron County, we knew it was only a matter of time before Zika would impact Hidalgo County," said Hidalgo County Judge Ramon Garcia. "Our Hidalgo County Health department has been diligently preparing for months by educating the public and holding community workshops with city, state and local leaders on mosquito borne illness prevention methods. As always, we are here to support the City of McAllen during this time."

Hidalgo County and the City of McAllen are also working together to conduct vector control activities to disrupt the breeding of mosquitoes capable of harboring the Zika virus. Various locations throughout McAllen have been equipped with mosquito traps, and the City's normal mosquito spraying routine has been increased. County and City public health officials will be working throughout the area to do public outreach, environmental assessments, and Zika-related education to assist residents in ridding their property of mosquito breeding sites.

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“City of McAllen and Hidalgo County staff are working diligently to keep our population safe and informed,” said City of McAllen City Manager Roel Roy Rodriguez, P.E.

To avoid the spread of Zika, the following prevention methods are recommended:

- Apply EPA-registered mosquito repellent that contains DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Spray exposed skin and clothing with repellent. Be sure to read label instructions on any repellent and use as directed. Dress protectively by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes when you are outside. Drain standing water in your backyard and neighborhood.
- Use air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. Stay indoors to prevent mosquito bites.
- Keep in mind that mosquitoes that spread the Zika virus bite mostly during the daytime so county residents should use precautions throughout the day. If you are not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes inside your home or hotel, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- Use protection during sex especially if your partner traveled to an area with Zika or if you are pregnant or considering getting pregnant. Women and men who are considering starting or expanding their family should talk to their healthcare provider to inform their decisions about timing of pregnancy.
- Remove standing water in cans, bottles, buckets, tires, wheel barrows or any container that can hold water.
- Cover trash cans or containers where water can collect.

To report mosquito concerns or illegal dumping, please call (956) 681-3111.

For more information on Zika, visit www.TexasZika.org or contact Hidalgo County Department of Health and Human Services at (956) 383-6221.

The Hidalgo County Health Department and City of McAllen will update and alert the public and media as necessary and will work closely together, as well as with other municipalities and organizations, to provide the best possible services to the local community.

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