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NEWS RELEASE

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Georgians Urged to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites *West Nile Virus Infections Increase in Georgia*

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has confirmed seven human cases of West Nile virus so far this year, including one death. Additionally, there has been one confirmed case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) which resulted in death. EEE is rare illness in humans, and only a few cases are reported in the United States each year.

Georgians are urged to protect themselves from mosquito bites, particularly when they are outside this Labor Day weekend. Mosquito season in Georgia typically lasts through October, sometimes longer depending on the weather.

“Georgians can reduce the number of mosquitoes around their homes and yards by getting rid of standing water,” said Chris Rustin, Ph.D., DPH director of Environmental Health. “Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes that may be infected with West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne diseases.”

Tip ‘n Toss all containers that can collect water - flowerpots, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires and birdbaths - anything that holds water and gives mosquitoes a place to thrive. Mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus look for stagnant water to breed in, so be sure gutters and eaves are clear of leaves and debris.

The most effective way to protect against WNV infection and all mosquito-borne diseases is to prevent mosquito bites. Observe the “**Five D’s of Prevention**” during your outdoor activities this holiday weekend:

- **Dusk/Dawn** – Mosquitoes carrying WNV usually bite at dusk and dawn, so avoid or limit outdoor activity at these times.
- **Dress** – Wear loose-fitting, long sleeved shirts and pants to reduce the amount of exposed skin.

- **DEET** – Cover exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET, which is the most effective repellent against mosquito bites.
- **Drain** - Empty any containers holding standing water because they are excellent breeding grounds for virus-carrying mosquitoes.
- **Doors** – Make sure doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly, and fix torn or damaged screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house.

Symptoms of WNV include headache, fever, neck discomfort, muscle and joint aches, swollen lymph nodes and a rash - that usually develop three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The elderly, those with compromised immune systems, or those with other underlying medical conditions are at greater risk for complications from the disease.

Anyone with questions about WNV or EEE should speak to their health care provider or call their local county health department, environmental health office.

More information about mosquito-borne illnesses and mosquito repellents can be found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/EnvironmentalHealth>. Information about West Nile Virus and EEE can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/> or <https://www.cdc.gov/easternequineencephalitis/index.html>

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About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information visit: www.dph.georgia.gov.