



Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Maryland Employers

**FROM:** Howard Haft, Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services  
William Dallas, Assistant Commissioner of Maryland Occupational Safety and Health

**DATE:** August 15, 2016

**RE:** Zika Virus and Employee Health Recommendations for Outdoor Workers in Maryland

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This memorandum provides guidance to Maryland employers and workers about prevention of potential occupational exposure to mosquito-borne Zika virus. This guidance is based on [interim guidance](#) from the U. S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. This Maryland guidance has been adapted from national guidance and reflects the current status of “no local transmission of Zika virus” in the State. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and other agencies have established systems to detect local transmission should it occur. The guidance would be revised if local transmission of Zika virus is identified in Maryland.

### **Occupational Categories Addressed in this Memorandum**

This memorandum addresses potential risks confronting outdoor workers, including mosquito control workers. It does not address the occupational risks of health care workers or laboratory workers.

### **Triggers for Initiating Protective Measures in this Memorandum**

The protective measures outlined in this memorandum would apply in areas where the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has identified one of the following conditions: (1) There is a possibility of local transmission of Zika virus in an identified area of the State; or (2) There is an effort to conduct mosquito control to prevent local transmission of Zika virus in a particular area of the State (this applies specifically to mosquito control workers).

### **Recommendations**

#### ***Outdoor Workers***

Outdoor workers can acquire Zika via mosquito bites. Recommended prevention strategies, which are based on the more detailed recommendations in the [OSHA/NIOSH guidelines](#),

include the following:

- Employers should educate these workers about Zika transmission and prevention. The [DHMH Zika website](#) has information about Zika in Maryland.
- Employees should wear clothing that protects against mosquito bites. Examples include lightweight, loose-fitting long sleeved shirts, long pants, gloves, hats, and mosquito netting to protect the face and neck. Always provide workers with adequate water, rest and shade, and monitor workers for signs and symptoms of heat illness.
- Encourage outdoor workers to apply an insect repellent that is active against *Aedes* mosquitoes. Examples of effective ingredients include DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always follow label precautions when using insect repellents, and choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that will be spent outdoors. Always wash before eating, then reapply when returning to the outdoors.
- Eliminate sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed.
- If symptoms develop, seek medical attention promptly.
- Workers who are concerned about outdoor work for personal medical reasons such as pregnancy should consult with their personal physicians.

### ***Mosquito Control Workers***

Mosquito control workers who are working in areas to control or prevent Zika transmission should follow all of the above recommendations and any additional guidance or requirements from the Maryland Department of Agriculture, but may need additional protection, depending on their job tasks.

- Workers entering or working around areas with dense mosquito populations may need additional skin protection to prevent bites. Employers should assess the risk of mosquito exposure and consider providing additional protective clothing.
- Workers who mix, load, apply, or do other tasks involving wide-area insecticide application, or area application, may need additional protection to prevent chemical exposures, in accordance with manufacturer recommendations and in accordance with the respirator selection, medical clearance, fit-testing, and other requirements of OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134).

Additional information about these recommendations and about the current status of Zika risks in Maryland can be found at: <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/pages/zika.aspx>. The complete OSHA/NIOSH interim guidance and additional information for worker protection can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/zika/index.html> and <https://www.dlrr.state.md.us/labor/mosh/>.