



CDC SUPPORTS TEXAS IN FIGHTING DEADLY WEST NILE VIRUS OUTBREAK

The 2012 West Nile Virus (WNV) outbreak in Texas started early and was more deadly than any WNV outbreak in state history. Nearly 1,900 people became sick with the virus during the 2012 outbreak, resulting in 89 fatalities. During a typical WNV season, approximately 10% of those infected will contract a neuroinvasive form of the disease, which can result in long term disabilities or death.

State and local health departments throughout Texas, particularly in and around the epicenter of the outbreak in Dallas, fought this public health crisis on multiple fronts – from mosquito reduction to

maintaining situational awareness to creative communications. Eliminating mosquitoes carrying the disease was essential to reducing the number of people infected. One of the most effective methods for killing these mosquitoes quickly and over large areas is spraying insecticides using airplanes; however, the state and local health department lacked adequate resources for spraying. CDC's PHPR provided desperately needed funds to enable this critical mosquito reduction method. CDC also sent a requested team of epidemiologists and entomologists to (1) compile epidemiologic and mosquito surveillance data, (2) provide technical advice for prevention and control activities, (3) evaluate the impact of mosquito control strategies on human and mosquito infection rates, and (4) assist with developing public health strategies for future WNV prevention and control efforts in Texas.

Situational awareness was maintained across all responding agencies during the outbreak through national, state, and local conference calls. Specialized equipment and supplies were purchased for state and local laboratories to test for infected mosquitoes, as well as support confirmation of human WNV cases.

On the communications side, the Texas Department of State Health Services developed and distributed Public Service Announcements and informational materials on preventing infections. They also formed innovative partnerships with both large and small retail stores to spread the message about how to minimize the risk of WNV infection. These stores used multiple communication methods, from posters to in-store television and audio announcements. Without these efforts by CDC and the state and local health departments, this terrible outbreak might have been even more dangerous and widespread.

