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Mosquito Abatement District Considering Spraying

With an expected surge in the number of area mosquito samples testing positive for West Nile Virus, the Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District is making plans to spray if necessary to help control adult mosquitoes within its 77-square-mile jurisdiction, which includes Oak Park.

While it is not certain when or even if spraying will include the Village, public health officials say they want residents to be aware of the possibility, and know where to find more detailed information.

Residents may call the mosquito abatement district at 708.447.1765 to be notified of the exact day of any scheduled spraying. Information also will be posted as it becomes available at www.oak-park.us and broadcast on VOP-TV, the government access television station available to cable subscribers on channel six. Because weather affects spraying, it may be rescheduled on relatively short notice.

Insecticides used to spray for adult mosquitoes have been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and should not pose any undue risk to humans or animals. However, persons with asthma or other respiratory ailments, or who believe they are chemically sensitive, may wish to stay inside during spraying with their windows closed, and air conditioners off or set to recirculate and the exhaust closed.

Spraying typically occurs after dark, when winds are calm. The insecticides break down in sunlight within 24 hours and produce little residual effect.

Oak Park stopped spraying for nuisance mosquitoes more than 20 years ago, but gave the Board of Health and Department of Public Health the authority to allow spraying in health emergencies.

The last time spraying occurred in Oak Park was in late summer 2002, when Illinois led the nation in human cases and deaths from the virus. The epicenter of West Nile disease has since moved westward, but the virus remains a real threat, officials say. Illinois' first human case this year was confirmed in late July in downstate St. Clair County near St. Louis.

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Mosquito Spraying 2-2-2

Spraying to kill adult mosquitoes tends to be the control tool of last resort, as efforts focus first on killing mosquito larvae before they become adults. Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District workers have been treating all street catch basins with larvicide every seven to 10 days since the mosquito breeding season began, and the Oak Park Department of Public Health is working with residents to eliminate breeding opportunities such as standing water.

In the meantime, residents are urged to continue taking steps to prevent being bitten, such as avoiding being outdoors at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are the most active, leaving as little skin exposed as possible and using repellents containing DEET or Picaridin – being sure to follow manufacturers' instructions.

The chance of being infected with the West Nile Virus actually is very small, officials say. However, the experiences of the past few years have shown that a wide range of individuals may be susceptible, especially persons 50 years old or older, and those with compromised immune systems.

For more information on Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District activities and notices, visit www.desplainesvalleymad.com or call 708.447.1765. Information also is posted on the Department of Public Health pages of the Village website, www.oak-park.us, including links to the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

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