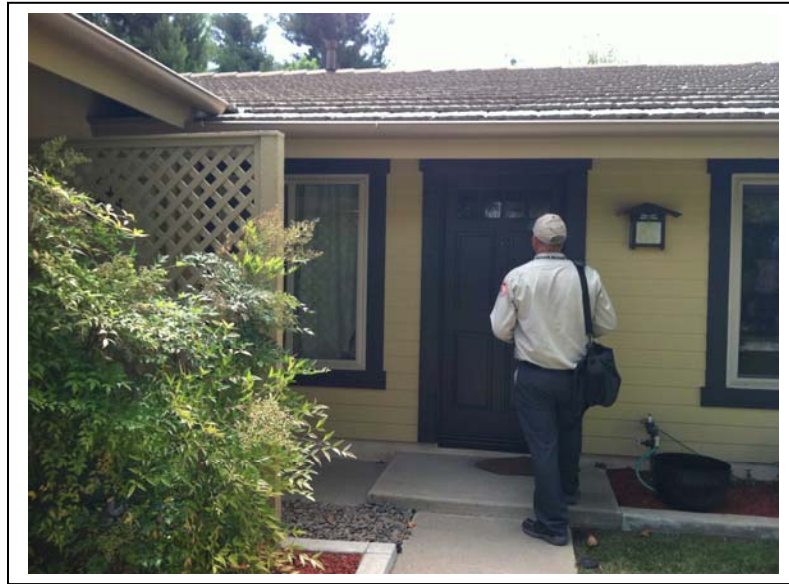


Knocking Out West Nile virus  
*Grassroots Effort Brings Message of Prevention to Residents*



*Supervisor Kevin Vargas approaches a residence*

District staff members launched two door-to-door campaigns during the month of August in response to extremely high levels of West Nile virus activity throughout all of Greater Los Angeles County this summer. The District adheres to an aggressive, year-round mosquito abatement, surveillance and public outreach program; however, epidemic years call for additional outreach and control measures to protect the public from a potentially debilitating disease. District staff has significantly increased its public outreach efforts in hopes of connecting with as many residents as possible.

The first campaign took place on Friday, August 12 and Saturday, August 13. Dedicated staff members visited residents in Norwalk, Sherman Oaks, Studio City and Whittier. The second door-to-door outreach effort took place on Friday, August 26 and Saturday, August 27. For the second campaign, District employees knocked on doors in Diamond Bar, Hacienda Heights, Reseda and Van Nuys. The successful on-foot campaigns allowed the District to reach residents that may not have otherwise heard the message about the West Nile virus risk in L.A. County. Informational brochures and breeding source inspections were offered to those who answered their doors. Door hangers alerting residents of the West Nile virus risk in their area along with prevention tips were distributed to all targeted homes.

“A door-to-door campaign is an excellent way to bring the message to the community,” says Director of Operations Mark Daniel. “We hope that the face-to-face, personal interaction will motivate residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites and to share the message at their churches, P.T.A. meetings and other community gatherings.” He continued that the District appreciates and relies on community partnerships to eliminate breeding sources around the homes and to report breeding sources in neighborhoods.

West Nile virus first appeared in California in 2003 and is now endemic to the region. Under the proper conditions, virus activity can amplify to epidemic levels in any given year. The District refers to years 2004 and 2008 as epidemic years based on West Nile virus infection rates in the mosquito and bird populations as well as number of reported human cases. District scientists have recently declared 2011 to be another epidemic year based on West Nile virus infection rates similar to those recorded in 2004 and 2008.

There is no cure for West Nile virus and that is why prevention is key. The most important fact for residents to remember is that West Nile virus is generally spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. This means that if you prevent mosquito bites, then you can prevent West Nile virus transmission. Activities between dusk and dawn should be avoided when possible because that is when mosquitoes in this region are most active. Long-sleeve shirts and pants will help prevent mosquitoes from biting as will applying insect repellent on exposed skin. The District recommends using insect repellents containing the active ingredients DEET, IR3535, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Around the home, properly-fitted, well-maintained screens on windows and doors will help keep mosquitoes out.

West Nile virus will always be a threat in California. During this epidemic year, it is crucial that residents remember to make their health a priority and protect themselves and their families from West Nile. District staff members expect that their efforts will have a lasting impact with residents and help to prevent human cases this year.