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## **OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR EMPHASIZES PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO HELP PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES**

**OKALOOSA COUNTY** – Dr. Karen Chapman, Director at the Okaloosa County Health Department, emphasizes the importance of protection against mosquito-borne diseases during the summer rainy season, which includes peak mosquito activity months. The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) works with partner agencies (including the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, mosquito control agencies, and state universities) throughout the year, to monitor the presence of illnesses carried by mosquitoes, including West Nile virus (WNV) infection, St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE), and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Although mosquito diseases can cause serious illnesses and even death in people of any age, children and those over 50 are at greatest risk for severe disease. Physicians should contact the Okaloosa County Health Department if they suspect an individual may have a mosquito-borne illness. DOH laboratories provide testing services for physicians treating patients with clinical signs of mosquito-borne diseases.

### **To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to practice the “5 D’s”:**

- **Dusk & Dawn** – Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood.
- **Dress** – Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- **DEET** – When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing up to 30 percent DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) are recommended. Other effective mosquito repellents include picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- **Drainage** – Check around the home to rid standing water - where mosquitoes lay eggs.

### **Tips on Repellent Use**

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is appropriate. DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children less than 3 years old.
- Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when outside.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child’s skin and clothing.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing. Do not apply repellent to the eyes or mouth, cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing or gear.

### **Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites:**

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water and pump out bilges on boats
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet/animal feeding dishes at least once a week
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water

For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses, visit DOH’s Environmental Health web site at [www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/) or call the Okaloosa County Health Department at (850) 833-9247. ###