



# State Emergency Operations Center

## Joint Information Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Returning Home After the Flood: Protect Yourself from Mosquito-Borne Illness**

**CLINTON, Miss.**—As the floodwaters along the Mississippi River and its tributaries continue to recede and cleanup efforts begin, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and the Mississippi State Department of Health urge residents to reduce their risk of contracting a mosquito-borne illness, such as West Nile virus, by following cleanup and protection guidelines.

West Nile virus is transmitted primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. People cannot become infected through ordinary contact with an infected bird, horse or human.

Protect yourself by removing mosquito breeding areas from your property:

- Rid property of all standing water. Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots and similar water-holding containers.
- Remove all unused tires on the property. Discarded tires have become the most common mosquito breeding sites in the country.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Keep garbage cans tightly closed, and be sure water does not collect in the bottoms of cans.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are kept outdoors.
- Change the water in bird baths every two to three days.
- Remove all leaf debris.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly, and clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall.
- Clean vegetation and debris from the edges of ponds.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs.
- Drain standing water from pool covers.

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- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Be sure that all outdoor home improvement projects are properly graded and backfilled to prevent drainage problems.
- Remove outdoor pet food and water dishes that are not being used.
- Flush livestock water troughs twice per week.
- Repair damaged or torn window and door screens.

Reduce your risk of mosquito bites by staying indoors when possible. When outdoors, take personal protective measures, especially between dusk and dawn, which are peak mosquito biting times.

- Wear long, light-colored clothing.
- Use mosquito repellent with DEET. Products with up to 30 percent DEET will provide adequate protection under most conditions.
- Use DEET concentrations of 10 percent or less on children ages two years to 12 years of age, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children less than two years of age, parents should consult their pediatrician. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for use as printed on the product label.

For more information, visit [www.HealthyMS.com](http://www.HealthyMS.com) or dial Mississippi's toll-free West Nile virus hotline: 1-877-WST-NILE (1-877-978-6453).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has opened public hotlines for questions concerning West Nile virus: English: 1-888-246-2675; Spanish: 1-888-246-2857; Hearing-impaired: 1-866-874-2646.

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*Visit MEMA online at [www.msema.org](http://www.msema.org). You can also follow us on Twitter and Facebook using the keyword MSEMA.*

*For more information on flood safety, visit the Mississippi Department of Health at [www.HealthyMS.com](http://www.HealthyMS.com). Also, look for us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/HealthyMS](http://www.facebook.com/HealthyMS) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/msdh](http://www.twitter.com/msdh).*