



# SHELBY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 21, 2016

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## FIRST HUMAN DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS IN SHELBY COUNTY CONFIRMED

MEMPHIS, TN – The Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) confirmed the first human death due to West Nile Virus (WNV) in Shelby County, and health officials continue to urge residents to assist in reducing the mosquito populations as well as take precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

Humans can contract WNV after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Although WNV can occasionally cause severe disease, most human infections are mild, resulting in fever, headache and body aches that last only a few days. Symptoms of severe disease include a high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma or convulsions. Persons over age 50 and those with compromised immune systems are at higher risk of severe disease and should be careful to avoid mosquito bites.

The SCHD Vector Control Program treats areas within all ZIP codes by applying larvicides to standing bodies of water to decrease the adult mosquito population. Larviciding is the practice of applying an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insecticide to areas where mosquito breeding has been confirmed and is the most effective way of eliminating mosquito populations.

As an additional precaution, SCHD continues to conduct scheduled truck-mounted sprayings of EPA-approved insecticides, weather permitting, in specific ZIP codes within Shelby County. Truck mounted spraying only effectively kills adult mosquitoes currently flying at the time the insecticide is released.

Residents, however, are highly encouraged to be vigilant as it relates to controlling mosquito populations around their homes and businesses. Eliminating the potential for standing water to accumulate around homes and businesses is one of the most effective ways to help reduce the mosquito burden.

Finally, everyone should practice the **4 D's**:

- **DEFEND** yourself by using insect repellent. Follow label instructions.
- **DRESS** in long sleeves/pants, loose and light colored clothing when outdoors.
- **DUSK/DAWN** stay indoors during this time to avoid mosquitoes when they are most active.
- **DRAIN** standing water and install or repair window screens.

Mission

*To promote, protect and improve the health and environment of all Shelby County residents.*

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