

DRAFT – DSHS Aerial Mosquito Control Key Messages

What's the situation with mosquitoes after Harvey?

- The rain left behind by Hurricane Harvey has created large breeding grounds for mosquitoes that lay their eggs to hatch in floodwater.
- Large numbers of mosquitoes are starting to emerge, first along the southern part of the area affected by Harvey and then further up the coast, and threaten to hamper recovery efforts.
- The vast majority of mosquitoes that breed in floodwater are “nuisance” mosquitoes that don’t transmit illnesses but can have a serious effect on recovery operations by preventing responders and people affected from being outside
- Widespread flooding also introduces the possibility of an increase in the number of mosquitoes capable of spreading disease.
- To combat the disruption these mosquitoes can cause to recovery efforts, the Texas Department of State Health Services has activated its aerial mosquito control contract with Clarke and requested additional mosquito control assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Why aerial spraying?

- Aerial spraying is only one part of the solution for controlling mosquitoes, but it is the one method that can rapidly reduce the number of mosquitoes in a large area.
- It is the most effective method when large areas must be treated quickly.

How does it work?

- A small amount of insecticide, one to two tablespoons per acre, is dispersed by airplanes equipped with special nozzles that create ultra-low volume droplets specifically calibrated to affect mosquitoes.
- The tiny droplets float in the air and kill adult mosquitoes on contact.
- Any droplets that do settle to the ground start to break down immediately on surfaces, in water and in sunlight.

Is aerial spraying of insecticides harmful to people, pets or livestock?

- No. During aerial spraying, a small amount of insecticide is sprayed over a large area, one to two tablespoons per acre.
- This small amount does not pose a health risk to people, pets or the environment in the area.
- EPA-registered products are used for aerial spraying, and label instructions will be followed by a licensed professional.

- If people prefer to stay inside and close windows and doors when spraying takes place they can, but it is not necessary.

Are there any effects on bodies of water used for recreation or drinking water?

- No. Because the small amount of insecticide breaks down quickly when it comes into contact with water, it has no lasting effects on water.

Will aerial application harm bees?

- Spraying will be done in order to minimize any effects on bees.
- Applications will be done starting around dusk when mosquitoes are most active and after bees have returned to the hive for the night. The insecticides dissipate and break down quickly in the environment, and when bees emerge in daylight, they are not affected.
- We do not anticipate any impact to bees or other non-target species.
- Though pesticide applications around dusk and dawn will not cause a significant exposure to bees, beekeepers may choose to cover their colonies and prevent bees from exiting during treatment.

Are there precautions people should take?

According to the EPA, people may prefer to stay inside and close windows and doors when spraying takes place, but it is not necessary. Those who are especially concerned about chemicals may choose to take some of these steps to help reduce exposure:

- Pay attention to specific information on spraying in your area.
- Stay indoors with the windows closed during spraying.
- If you are outdoors when spraying takes place and come in contact with the chemical, rinse your skin and eyes with water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables from your garden before storing, cooking, or eating.
- Cover outside items like furniture and grills before the spraying takes place. Bring pets and items like pet food dishes and children's toys indoors. Rinse any uncovered items left outside before using.
- If you think you have had a reaction, talk to your doctor or call the regional Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

What can people do to combat mosquitoes and mosquito bites?

- Insect repellent
- Source reduction
- Etc.