

HAZARD ALERT

RISK MANAGEMENT SECTION



Department of
Environment and Conservation

Date: 9/06/2010

Alert No: 11

Source:

Internal

External

Author: Department of Health

Identified Hazard: Mosquito-borne disease risk in the Kimberley

Risk Rating:

Low

Moderate

High

Significant

Nature of Incident:

Injury

Property Damage

Near-hit

Other:

Description of Incident:

“Murray Valley encephalitis virus and Kunjin virus are both carried by mosquitoes, and while the risk of being infected and becoming unwell is low, the illnesses can be severe and people should take sensible precautions to avoid mosquito bites,.

Incident Time and Date:

9th June 2010

Symptoms:

“Initial symptoms of MVE include fever, drowsiness, headache, stiff neck, nausea and dizziness and people experiencing these symptoms should seek medical advice quickly. In severe cases, people may experience fits, lapse into a coma, may be left with permanent brain damage or die.

“In young children, fever might be the only early sign, so parents should see their doctor if concerned, and particularly if their child experiences drowsiness, floppiness, irritability, poor feeding, or general distress.

“Infection with Kunjin virus can cause symptoms that are similar to Ross River virus disease, such as swollen and aching joints, fever and rash. However in rare cases, Kunjin, like MVE, can cause more severe symptoms which include headache, neck stiffness, fever, delirium and coma.”

Recommendations: The warning particularly applies to people undertaking outdoor activities during the evening and night in coastal and inland areas of the Kimberley region, but also in other parts of the northwest if mosquitoes are abundant.

People do not need to alter their plans to visit the Kimberley region, but it is important to avoid mosquito bites by taking a few simple steps, such as:

- avoiding outdoor exposure from dusk and at night
- wearing protective (long, loose-fitting) clothing when outdoors
- using a personal repellent containing diethyl toluamide (DEET) or picaridin. The most effective and long-lasting formulations are lotions or gels. Most natural or organic repellents are not as effective as DEET or picaridin
- ensuring insect screens are installed and completely mosquito-proof: use mosquito nets and mosquito-proof tents
- ensuring infants and children are adequately protected against mosquito bites, preferably with suitable clothing, bed nets or other forms of insect screening.

Produced by Risk Management Section