June 4, 2018

School Superintendents and School Board Members:

Thank you for your commitment to educating children in Texas. While the school year draws to a close, mosquito season is just beginning. To protect our state's health, we ask you to please help us raise awareness about preventing the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses, such as Zika, West Nile and dengue.

Mosquito activity increases with warmer weather, and so does the threat of these illnesses. Pregnant women are particularly at risk of Zika; the virus can cause birth defects in unborn infants. Following this letter are steps to help prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. We ask that you share this information with students, staff and the public.

Additionally, TexasZika.org has free information and materials in English and Spanish, including fact sheets and posters, that you can download or order in printed form. The Zika communications toolkit found there has newsletter copy, social media content, and more. We encourage you to use these materials to help educate your communities.

The website also has website banners and other shareable graphics; please post and share these images on your school websites and social media platforms. The same simple steps outlined there to prevent Zika will be effective against all mosquito-borne diseases.

Your impact extends well beyond the walls of school campuses and into your community. Keeping your campus free of mosquitoes helps protect your staff, students and their families, and the entire community. As you maintain your campus over the summer, please work with your community to eliminate areas that could harbor mosquitoes.

Please take action now to protect your students and communities. DSHS has technical expertise to help you prepare your campuses for the summer months, so don't hesitate to contact them at TexasZika@dshs.texas.gov.

Thank you for your help with this important public health matter.

Sincerely,

Greg Abbott Governor	John Hellerstedt, M.D. Commissioner, DSHS	Mike Morath Commissioner, TEA

Zika Virus Protection and Prevention

Measures for Individuals to Protect Themselves from Mosquito Bites

- wear insect repellent,
- cover up with long-sleeved shirts and long pants,
- keep mosquitoes out with air conditioning or intact window screens,
- limit outdoor activities during peak mosquito times.

Measures for Individuals to Prevent Mosquito Breeding

- At least weekly, carefully check the area around your home, school or workplace for mosquito breeding areas:
    - clear and empty gutters;
    - empty or get rid of cans, buckets, old tires, pots, plant saucers and other containers that hold water;
    - remove standing water around structures and from flat roofs;
    - change water in pet dishes daily;
    - rinse and scrub vases and other indoor water containers weekly;
    - change water in wading pools and bird baths several times a week;
    - maintain backyard pools or hot tubs;
    - cover trash containers;
    - water lawns and gardens carefully so water does not stand for several days;
    - screen rain barrels and openings to water tanks or cisterns; and
    - treat front and back door areas of homes with residual insecticides if mosquitoes are abundant nearby.
- If mosquito problems persist, consider pesticide applications for vegetation around the home.

Measures to Protect Communities from Zika Virus

- conduct neighborhood outreach about active precautions individuals can take to protect themselves and their families from mosquito bites;
- initiate or enhance monitoring and surveillance of mosquito activity;
- develop a local contingency plan for mosquito abatement and surveillance, and plan for additional control measures if needed;
- keep public drains and ditches clear of weeds and trash so water will not collect;
- implement efforts to clean up illegal dump sites and collect heavy trash; and
- encourage people to report illegal dumpsites and standing water, and respond quickly to these complaints.