

EPI Update for Friday, July 4, 2008
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Carbon monoxide (CO) is a risk after flooding**
- **Post-flood mosquito surveillance**
- **Fireworks safety**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a risk after flooding

During recovery from widespread flooding and storm damage, carbon monoxide poisoning is a huge risk, as evidenced by the recent incident involving 13 people. A cleaning crew was working with a gasoline-fueled power washer inside a building in Cedar Rapids, resulting in an outbreak of CO poisoning.

The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Exposure to CO can cause loss of consciousness and death.

IDPH would like to remind Iowans that CO poisoning is not only preventable, but it is also a reportable disease in Iowa. Under Iowa Code, carbon monoxide poisoning should be reported immediately by phone (800-362-2736). Also, outbreaks of any kind are immediately reportable by phone. For reporting purposes, a case of carbon monoxide poisoning is defined as a person with a blood carbon monoxide level equal to or greater than 10 percent carboxyhemoglobin or its equivalent with a breath analyzer test, or a clinical diagnosis of carbon monoxide poisoning regardless of test results.

Important CO Poisoning Prevention Tips

- Unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented, never run a generator, pressure washer, or any other gasoline or propane-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open.
- Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline or propane-powered engine outside when it is near an open window, door, or vent where its exhaust can vent into an enclosed area.
- If CO poisoning is suspected, consult a health care professional immediately.

For more information, visit

www.idph.state.ia.us/idph_universalhelp/main.aspx?system=IdphEpiManual
(and click on environmental diseases then CO poisoning) or
www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/flood/carbonmonoxide_poisoning.pdf.

Post-flood mosquito surveillance

Floodwater mosquitoes usually appear about 1-2 weeks after heavy rains and flooding. Preliminary mosquito surveillance conducted by the Iowa State University Medical Entomology Laboratory in Iowa's flooded areas has demonstrated that *Aedes vexans* and *Aedes trivittatus*, (floodwater mosquitoes), are abundant. These flood water mosquitoes are more of a nuisance than a health threat because they are rarely infected with viruses such as West Nile.

However, after flooding, *Culex* mosquito populations also increase due to stagnant waters left by the flooding. *Culex* mosquitoes are a significant public health threat because they can transmit viruses, such as West Nile and St Louis encephalitis viruses. Typically, transmission of West Nile virus to humans begins in mid-summer and peaks in late summer or early autumn.

Insect repellants like DEET are recommended for all persons working outside or inside flooded homes. For more information on insect repellents see www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/wnv/mosquito_repellents.pdf.

For more information about mosquito prevention, visit

www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/flood/mosquito_checklist.pdf.

Fireworks safety

Fireworks-related injuries are most common on and around July 4th and New Year's Eve. In 2006, in the US more than 9,000 people were treated in emergency departments for injuries related to fireworks. Five percent of these people were hospitalized. Most of the injuries were burns to the hands, eyes and face, and most injuries were to children and young people. Firecrackers and sparklers were the leading causes of injuries.

Most dangerous fireworks are banned by federal law; however, many fireworks that are illegal in Iowa are available by driving to a nearby state where laws differ. IDPH encourages Iowans to enjoy fireworks by attending a public display by trained professionals.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

Have a safe, healthy, and happy week, and a great Forth of July!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736