



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Statement by Health Commissioner Harry Chen on the Second Death in Vermont from Eastern Equine Encephalitis

September 18, 2012

As the Health Commissioner, I am sad to report the state's second death this month from Eastern Equine Encephalitis. Our condolences on behalf of the state go out to the family of Scott Sgorbati, of Sudbury. He was 49 years old. He is the second Vermonter to die from this virus, which is caused by exposure to the bite of an infected mosquito.

Richard Breen, 87, of Brandon passed away earlier this month.

I know this will raise the level of concern Vermonters have about possible exposure to EEE. I want to remind Vermonters that this is a very rare virus. On average there are only six cases nationwide each year. It can lead to life-threatening illness for about a third of all people infected. So while exposure is extremely rare, it is a very serious illness.

We took proactive steps to reduce the risk of exposure last week along with the Agency of Agriculture and conducted aerial spraying in areas where EEE carrying mosquitoes had been identified. No amount of mosquito mitigation will eliminate the risk. There will be a very small risk of exposure to EEE until after the first hard frost. What's important right now is that Vermonters are aware of EEE and take steps to avoid exposure.

We continue to advise all Vermonters to take the following actions to protect themselves from mosquito bites and risk of infection from EEE and West Nile virus: Limit the amount of time spent outdoors at dawn and dusk. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants outside when mosquitoes are active. Use insect repellents labeled as being effective against mosquitoes. Remove standing water around your house.

I want to remind you that this is a very rare disease. Having two Vermonters die from EEE is tragic and - I am sure - difficult for family members to understand.

Once again, I want to offer my condolences to the families of Mr. Sgorbati and Mr. Breen on behalf of the State of Vermont.

Harry Chen, MD
Commissioner
Vermont Department of Health

Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
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