



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HHS PROVIDES ADDITIONAL FUNDS THROUGH CDC TO HELP STATES COMBAT WEST NILE VIRUS

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today announced that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is making \$10 million in additional funds available to states to strengthen their efforts to combat West Nile virus.

"We continue working closely with state and local health departments to support their efforts to protect people from West Nile virus," said Secretary Thompson. "These funds will give states added capacity to monitor the spread of West Nile virus and to further enhance their capabilities to protect their citizens."

Since June, five states have confirmed and reported a total of 113 human cases of West Nile virus through Arbonet, a computerized national system for tracking West Nile virus. As of August 8, 2002, Louisiana reports 71 cases; Mississippi, 28; Texas is reporting 12; Illinois has one case; and Alabama has one case. Five deaths have occurred, all in Louisiana.

Two of the hardest hit states -- Louisiana and Mississippi -- have requested and will receive \$3.4 million and \$300,000, respectively, to supplement their local efforts to slow the spread of the disease and to protect their citizens. The remaining money will be available to affected states requesting additional assistance. CDC already provides a total of \$17 million to 49 states and six cities for prevention and control measures related to West Nile virus. The additional funding brings CDC support to states for combating the spread of the virus to more than \$27 million this year.

"We anticipate that West Nile virus will expand into new areas of the United States as a result of the natural migratory patterns of birds," said Julie L. Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H., director of CDC. "Among the weapons against West Nile virus are easy, practical steps that individuals can take to reduce their chances for exposure," Gerberding said.

CDC recommends that people take the following steps to prevent West Nile virus:

- Eliminate sources of standing water on their property -- including potted outdoor plants that are watered regularly;
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET;
- Cover themselves with lightweight clothing as much as possible whenever they are outside.

CDC has set up public hotlines for questions concerning West Nile virus. The English number is 1-888-246-2675; the Spanish hotline is 1-888-246-2857, and the number for the hearing-impaired hotline is 1-866-874-2646.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

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