

CDC and OSHA Issue Interim Guidance for Protecting Workers from Occupational Exposure to Zika Virus

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued new guidance for employers of outdoors workers to inform workers of the risks of exposure to Zika through mosquito bites and to train them on how to protect themselves.

Specifically, employers are asked to provide insect repellents and encourage their use, and to urge workers to wear clothing that protects their hands, arms, legs and other exposed areas

The guidelines also ask employers to consider reassigning female workers who are pregnant or may become pregnant and male workers whose partner is pregnant or may become pregnant to indoor jobs to reduce their risk of mosquito bites.

For healthcare workers, the guidelines call for the use of standard infection control precautions to prevent exposure to Zika from infected blood.

The two agencies urge employers to allow flexibility for business travelers required travel to areas with active Zika transmission. In particular, it recommends delaying travel for pregnant women or those who may become pregnant or male workers with pregnant partners or partners who may become pregnant

If the virus reaches the American mainland this summer the recommendation could impose a major burden on industries such as construction, agriculture, transportation, amusement parks and cafes, which employ hundreds of thousands of outdoor workers

The full guidance and recommendations can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/s0422-interim-guidance-zika.html>

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