



October 16, 2024

PASCO COUNTY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT INTENSIFIES EFFORTS FOLLOWING HURRICANES HELENE AND MILTON WHILE ALSO COMBATING MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASE

Contact:

Maria Johnson

MJohnson@PascoMosquito.org

727-376-4568

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pasco County Mosquito Control District Advises of Additional Local Dengue Cases and Ongoing Enhancement of Mitigation Efforts Following Hurricanes Helene and Milton

Pasco County, FL – October 16, 2024 – In response to the recent impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton and the emergence of additional locally acquired dengue virus, the Pasco County Mosquito Control District (PCMCD) has been ramping up its mosquito control efforts. The district is committed to protecting public health by effectively managing mosquito populations through comprehensive ground and aerial activities.

Following the identification of additional locally acquired dengue virus cases and two hurricanes, district staff have been actively conducting mosquito control operations during both daytime and evening hours. These efforts focus on targeting mosquitoes in their immature stages to prevent them from maturing into flying and biting adults that can spread disease and cause significant nuisance to the community.

Dengue Virus - There is a heightened concern additional residents will become ill. Symptoms of dengue virus include; headache, fever, chills, muscle aches, bone and joint pain, nausea, vomiting, pain behind the eyes, rash, bleeding of the gums. In response to this public health concern, PCMCD is implementing increased surveillance and control measures in the affected area to reduce the risk and prevent further transmission of the virus.

Why Mosquito Control is Vital After a Storm - Effective mosquito control is essential, especially after severe weather events. Standing water from flooding provides ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes, which can quickly multiply. By reducing mosquito populations, we help protect not only the health of our community but also the various emergency response personnel working tirelessly to aid residents and restore normalcy. The presence of mosquitoes can hinder these efforts, creating additional health risks and discomfort for those already facing the challenges of recovery.

“We understand the vital role that effective mosquito control plays in protecting our community’s health, especially following recent, back to back major hurricanes. Our team is fully committed to reducing mosquito populations and ensuring a safe environment for all residents and first responders.”

—Adriane Rogers, Executive Director, Pasco County Mosquito Control District

Key activities include:

- **Proactive Applications:** Utilizing both helicopter and truck-mounted treatments to target mosquito larvae and reduce populations before they can reach adulthood.
- **Managing Debris:** The debris left in the wake of Hurricane Helene has created new breeding sites for mosquitoes. The district is working to mitigate these areas to prevent further mosquito infestation.

- **Addressing Flooded Areas:** While floodwaters from Hurricane Milton have created challenges, the district remains vigilant, deploying resources to hard-to-reach areas affected by unprecedented riverine flooding.
- **Educating Citizens:** To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to **Drain and Cover**: Residents are urged to take the following precautions to protect themselves and their families:

DRAIN standing water. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water. Regularly check and empty items that can collect water.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flowerpots or any other containers where rain or flood water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances, and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once per week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- Clothing - Wear socks, shoes, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts to minimize skin exposure when outside.
- Repellent - Apply U.S. EPA-approved insect repellent to bare skin and clothing.
 - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, and IR3535 are effective.
- Avoid - Stay inside around peak mosquito activity times. Mosquitoes that can spread dengue are more active during the day, so take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites during early morning and late afternoon, *as well as* dusk and dawn.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house.

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios to keep mosquitoes outside. This is particularly important for areas without electricity, as residents tend to leave doors and windows open until power is restored.

The PCMCD's staff of dedicated and passionate mosquito control professionals remain committed to closely monitoring the situation. For additional information or to report mosquito concerns, please contact the Pasco County Mosquito Control District at 727-376-4568 or visit our website at PascoMosquito.org.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we work together to protect our community from mosquito-borne diseases.

About Pasco County Mosquito Control District

The Pasco County Mosquito Control District is dedicated to safeguarding the public's health through effective mosquito control and prevention programs. Our mission is to protect the health and well-being of the citizens of Pasco County through the prevention and control of mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases. Our goal is to control both pestiferous and disease carrying mosquito populations to a tolerable level in the safest, most economical manner, while using a variety of methods in such a way as to minimize potential effects on people, wildlife, and the environment.

Contact:

Maria Johnson, Community Engagement Director, Pasco County Mosquito Control District

Phone: 727-376-4568

Email: MJohnson@PascoMosquito.org

Website: <https://www.PascoMosquito.org/>