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## What Employers Need to Know About the Zika Virus

As has been widely reported in the media, the Zika virus is becoming a serious health menace in many parts of the globe and more recently in isolated parts of the United States. While not a life threatening condition, the virus can be dangerous, especially for pregnant women. To assist your organization in readiness efforts related to contending with the virus, we have developed this outline of key facts related to Zika. Unlike influenza or other pandemic illness, Zika will not impact companies organizationally through increased absences or productivity losses. Yet if an organization has employees traveling internationally for business purposes (or pleasure) they need to be aware of the facts and exposures.

- **What is Zika?** - Zika is an RNA virus related to the West Nile virus, yellow fever and dengue viruses and is passed on by the bite of a certain type of infected mosquito. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters although they can also bite at night. Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 and is named after the Zika Forest in Uganda. In 1952, the first human cases of Zika were detected and since then, outbreaks of Zika have been reported in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Zika outbreaks have likely occurred in many locations. A person bitten by a mosquito that has the virus then becomes viremic. Before 2007, at least 14 cases of Zika had been documented, although other cases were likely to have occurred but not reported since the symptoms of Zika are similar to those of many other diseases.
- **What happens if someone gets Zika?** - The most common symptoms of Zika are slight fever, rashes, joint pain, conjunctivitis (aka pink eye), muscle pain or headaches. Zika is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital and many people might not realize they have been infected. Zika can be tested for through a simple urine test.
- **What are the health concerns?** - The pressing concern is that Zika can be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Infection during pregnancy can cause certain birth defects, including brain damage. This is the most dangerous aspect of the condition. Zika is not considered a fatal illness.
- **Is there a vaccine or cure?** - At the present time, there is no vaccine or medicine for Zika.
- **Where is Zika now?** - The Florida Department of Health has identified an area in one neighborhood of Miami where Zika is being spread by mosquitoes and there are wide spread outbreaks in Puerto Rico. Here is a link to the global hot spots where Zika is spreading: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/active-countries.html>
- **What can an employers do?** - To maximize the success of corporate response planning, companies should communicate openly with state and local public health and law

enforcement agencies. Since Zika has not spread nationally at this juncture, not all local resources may be equipped at this time. If Zika spreads more broadly in the US we can expect enhanced readiness efforts. None the less, early contacts are appropriate, including contacting local hospitals and key healthcare providers that can assist employees or dependents if they are bitten and feel they may be infected. Here is a link to the CDC's special web site devoted to Zika that is a good general resource:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/about/>

**Other Resources** - There are a variety of other resources available largely from government agencies that provide useful information about Zika. These are below for your reference.

**Preparedness Guides and Toolkits:**

- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has a [website](#) for businesses and individuals preparing for an emergency.
- The [U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) has developed an in-depth guide to citizen preparedness entitled, "Are You Ready?".
- The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the American Red Cross provide information to assist the public health response to emergencies.
- The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has a [guide](#) and [fact sheet](#) on emergency preparedness and response.
- The U.K. has [guidance](#) for emergency preparedness and response.
- The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) has a strategy for strengthening the health sector.

**Public Health and Infectious Disease:**

- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)
- [Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy](#) (CIDRAP)

**Country and Regional Context** - These resources share the relevant stakeholders involved in emergency response at a country or regional level.

- [China](#)
- [European Union](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization](#)
- [Russia](#)
- [United Arab Emirates](#)

**What to do now?** – Since Zika is not a life threatening virus or one that can cause wide-spread population illness, employers should be aware, but not panicked. Employers may wish to review business travel to impacted countries and properly educate employees as to how to avoid contracting the virus. Employers may also opt to make employees aware as to the overall dangers of Zika as a general public service. We hope this communication and related resources are of help to you. If we can assist further, please contact your Conner Strong & Buckelew account representative toll free at 1-877-861-3220 with any questions.



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