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Building a Healthy Community

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Harris County Confirms First Zika-Associated Death in Texas**

**Harris County, Texas (August 9, 2016)** - Harris County Public Health (HCPH) has confirmed a Zika-associated death in a newborn female, making it the first Zika-related death in the State of Texas. HCPH received a positive Zika test result on an infant who was born with birth defects, including microcephaly. The child died shortly after being born. The mother traveled to Latin America during her pregnancy where it is suspected she became infected, and delivered the baby in Harris County.

“The saddest outcome of Zika’s health effects often impact the most vulnerable. We are devastated to report our first case of Zika-associated death and our hearts go out to the family,” stated Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Executive Director of HCPH. “While this is a travel-associated case, we know that prevention is key to reducing the risk of Zika virus infection. Harris County Public Health continues to actively work on protecting the community from mosquito-related diseases, but individuals must also protect themselves from getting bitten by mosquitoes locally and abroad.”

HCPH continues to encourage residents to take precautions to prevent Zika infection. When outdoors, prevent mosquito bites by using an EPA-registered insect repellent that contains one of the following: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Follow product instructions.

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, a member of the state Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response said, “Despite the horrible news regarding the recent Zika-related death, the residents of Harris County should be reassured that their county and state officials are continuing to monitor Zika-related developments worldwide and have plans in place to respond to any potential risks to public health. County health officials and emergency management personnel have been studying Zika intently and are prepared to respond to any local developments.”

Zika virus is spread primarily through the bite of the *Aedes* species mosquito. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symptoms of Zika are usually mild and include fever, rash, conjunctivitis (red eyes), and joint-pain, lasting several days to a week. Zika can also be transmitted sexually. CDC has confirmed Zika is linked to birth defects. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon and death is rare. There is no vaccine to prevent or medicine to treat Zika virus infection.

*HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.*

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The CDC recommends that all people who are [traveling to areas where the Zika virus is found](#) should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites. CDC recommends that pregnant women should avoid traveling to Zika affected areas.

Before traveling abroad, HCPH recommends individuals contact their healthcare provider who may recommend vaccines or important preventive medication for [travel-related diseases](#).

To learn more about the Zika virus, visit: [www.hcphtx.org](http://www.hcphtx.org) and [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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