



HR News Alerts

OSHA Releases Guidance on Protecting Outdoor Workers from Exposure to Zika Virus

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued [guidance](#) for protecting outdoor workers from occupational exposure to Zika virus.

Background

Workers who are exposed on the job to mosquitoes or the blood or other body fluids of Zika-infected individuals may be at risk for an occupationally acquired Zika virus infection. **Outdoor workers may be at the greatest risk of exposure to the Zika Virus, which is spread primarily through the bites of infected mosquitoes.** Under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act), employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious harm to employees. The guidance below may help employers comply with the law.

OSHA Guidance

Employers who employ workers who work outdoors should educate employees as to the signs and symptoms of Zika infection. If any of the following symptoms develop, employees should be encouraged to seek medical attention promptly, and to discuss any possible exposure to mosquitoes or infections spread by mosquitoes with a healthcare provider:



- Fever;
- Rash;
- Joint pain;
- Pink or red eyes;
- Muscle pain; and/or
- Headaches

Among other things, employers should also consider taking the following actions:

- Training workers about the importance of eliminating areas where mosquitoes breed at an outdoor worksite;
- Providing insect repellents and protective clothing for employees' exposed skin (and encouraging their use);
- Providing additional personal protective equipment (such as safety glasses, face shields, and/or gowns) for employees who routinely work with insecticides to control mosquitoes; and
- Instructing employees as to how to protect themselves from being infected by the Zika virus.

OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommend that employees talk to their supervisor(s) about any outdoor work assignment(s) or travel to Zika-affected areas if those employees are or may become pregnant, or, if a worker's partner is or may become pregnant.

[Click here](#) to read the text of the guidance.

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