



Vector Control District
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Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2023

County of Santa Clara to Use Drones to Reduce Mosquito Population

The County will begin using unmanned aircraft systems, or drones, to apply larvicides in wetlands and other non-residential areas, enhancing the County's ability to control mosquito populations and prevent West Nile virus and other vector-borne diseases.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. – The County of Santa Clara Vector Control District this week will begin using unmanned aircraft systems, or drones, to control mosquito larvae along San Francisco Bay and help prevent West Nile virus and other vector-borne diseases.

The District received approval from the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, April 18, to use the drones for applying larvicide in non-residential areas. Controlling larval mosquitoes is vital for reducing the mosquito population in the surrounding region.

The first drone flights are scheduled to go out this week. Members of the media who are interested in observing and filming the drone operation should contact sccpublicaffairs@ceo.sccgov.org.

The primary goal of developing a drone program is to protect public health. It is critical for the District to access and treat marshland and other remote, non-residential areas in Santa Clara County that serve as breeding habitat for mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile virus and other diseases once they mature. Some mosquitoes found in the Bay Area can fly up to 25 miles once they

become adults.

The County's move to drones for eliminating larval mosquitoes is part of a trend among California vector control agencies.

"The Vector Control District's new drone program will protect not only public health but also our staff and the surrounding environment," said Edgar Nolasco, Director of the County's Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency. "Applying larvicide with drones is precise and effective and minimizes disruption to the ecosystem along the Bay."

The use of drones for mosquito control provides many benefits, including:

- Reducing the need for District staff to access difficult terrain and improving employee safety.
- Minimizing impacts on the local ecosystem.
- Precise application of larvicides.

Winter rains create mosquito-breeding habitat

After an exceptionally rainy winter, Santa Clara County has a surplus of stagnant water, creating ample breeding sources for mosquitoes. As a result, the District strongly encourages county residents to eliminate any sources of stagnant water on their properties.

"Mosquito control is a community effort," said Nolasco. "To protect yourselves and your neighbors from mosquito-borne diseases, we encourage you to regularly check your property for sources of standing water and remove them."

Here are some things you can do to eliminate mosquito-breeding sources.

On your property:

- Inspect for standing water on a weekly basis.
- Drain or turn over anything that can hold water, such as flowerpots, planter bases, pet dishes, buckets and old tires.
- Clean items like bird baths and pet bowls once a week to remove mosquito eggs.
- Clear debris from rain gutters on a regular basis to allow water to flow.
- Properly screen [rain barrels](#), cisterns and [irrigation drains](#) to prevent mosquito access.

- Fix leaky water faucets and broken sprinkler heads and avoid [overwatering](#) lawns and plants.
- Ensure swimming pool water levels are adequate for proper circulation and filtration.

Contact the District if you are being bothered by mosquitoes or know of a potential mosquito-breeding source. For free assistance with mosquito control or other vectors, residents can call the District office at (408) 918-4770, email vectorinfo@cep.sccgov.org, or submit [an online service request](#).

Residents can also request free mosquitofish, which eat mosquito larvae, to place in neglected pools or spas, ornamental ponds, water troughs and other artificial bodies of water. For more information on the County's mosquitofish program, visit www.sccvector.org/mosquitofish.

How the Vector Control District prevents mosquito-borne diseases

West Nile virus (WNV) is a significant public health concern. The California Department of Public Health considers it the state's most common and severe vector-borne disease, causing more than 7,000 human infections and nearly 400 deaths since 2003 when it was first detected in California.

Most people infected with WNV do not develop symptoms, while some may develop mild, flu-like symptoms. People with compromised immune systems and the elderly are at higher risk of severe symptoms and even death.

The District has a robust mosquito control program to mitigate the spread of WNV, which largely focuses on eliminating larval mosquitoes in standing water.

When the District detects adult mosquitoes carrying WNV, it takes the additional step of conducting adult mosquito control treatments in the immediate area to reduce the risk of human infection. Treatments are administered using truck-mounted machines that emit an ultra-low volume mist containing small amounts of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved insecticides. The treatments are safe for people, pets and animals. For more information on this practice, visit the District's [Adult Mosquito Control Treatment Information webpage](#).

Mosquitoes are typically most active in the summer and fall, as warm weather speeds up their life cycle. The District inspects marshes, catch basins, street curbs, creeks and other stagnant water sources throughout the County year-

round to find breeding mosquitoes and eliminate them. The drone program will focus solely on mosquito larvae and significantly enhance the District's ability to eliminate larval mosquitoes before they become adults.

Residents are encouraged to subscribe to the District's [monthly newsletter](#) and follow the agency on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) (@sccvcd) to receive educational information, links to resources, and vector prevention tips. Residents can also subscribe to the District's [mosquito treatment notification](#) list to receive treatment notifications directly in their inbox.

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ABOUT THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

The County of Santa Clara government serves a diverse, multi-cultural population of 1.9 million residents in Santa Clara County, California, making it more populous than 14 states in the U.S. The County provides essential services to its residents, including public health protection, environmental stewardship, medical services through the County of Santa Clara Health System, child and adult protection services, homelessness prevention and solutions, roads, park services, libraries, emergency response to disasters, protection of minority communities and those under threat, access to a fair criminal justice system, and many other public benefits.

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