

## What is the Zika virus?

- Spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which also carries dengue fever and yellow fever
- First discovered in Africa in the 1940s but is now spreading in Latin America
- Scientists say there is growing evidence of a link to microcephaly, that leads to babies being born with small heads
- Can lead to fever and a rash but most people show no symptoms, and there is no known cure
- Only way to fight Zika is to clear stagnant water where mosquitoes breed, and protect against mosquito bites



## Zika virus: Up to four million Zika cases predicted

Three to four million people could be infected with Zika virus in the Americas this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) predicts.

WHO director general Dr Margaret Chan said Zika had gone "from a mild threat to one of alarming proportions".

She has set up a Zika "emergency team" after the "explosive" spread of the virus.

Zika was first detected in Uganda in 1947, but has never caused an outbreak on this scale.

Brazil reported the first cases of Zika in South America in May 2015.

Most cases result in no symptoms and it is hard to test for, but WHO officials said between 500,000 and 1.5 million people had been infected in the country.

The virus has since spread to more than 20 countries in the region.

At the same time there has been a steep rise in levels of microcephaly - babies born with abnormally small heads - and the rare nervous system disorder Guillain-Barre syndrome.



*Countries with cases of Zika virus in the Americas*

The link between the virus and these disorders has not been confirmed, but Dr Chan said it was "strongly suspected" and was "deeply alarming".

And she warned the situation could yet deteriorate as "this year's El Niño weather patterns are expected to increase mosquito populations greatly in many areas".

## The mosquito menace

The mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, causing the spread of the Zika virus thrives in built up areas.

It does not need natural water sources to breed as it can lay eggs in the small and plentiful pools of stagnant water, such as gutters or flower pots, found in cities .



*Mosquito larvae thrive in stagnant water*

Zika is currently getting a lot of attention, but *Aedes aegypti* has long been known as the yellow fever mosquito.

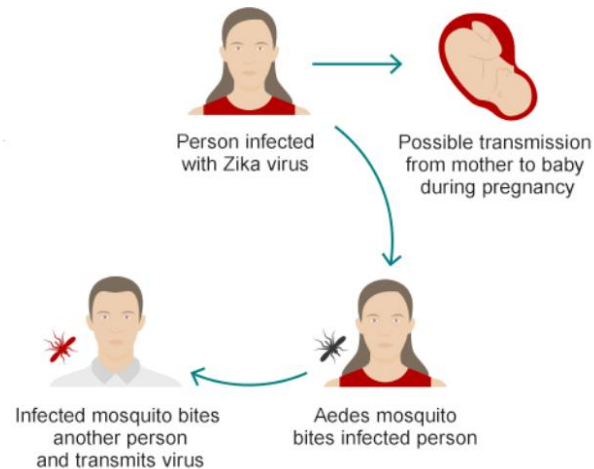
Yellow fever is a viral disease that can cause jaundice, bleeding and multiple organ failure in some cases. And 390 million people are infected with the dengue virus each year, largely as a result of bites from *Aedes aegypti*. Chikungunya, another virus causing alarm as it expands around the world, is also spread by the insects.

They do it by biting someone who is infected and then biting someone else.

Both the male and female mosquitoes feed off plant nectar. However, the females need a blood meal in order to produce eggs.

Two traits make them especially good at spreading disease.

First they feed almost exclusively on humans, so if they pick up a disease from one person, they are likely to pass it on with their next bite.



Other mosquitoes are less efficient spreaders as they feed off a variety of animals.

These particular blood suckers also drink little and often.

Rather than gorge their entire meal from one person and running the risk of being swatted they graze from multiple people making it easier to spread disease.

They are also active during the day so bed nets are less effective.

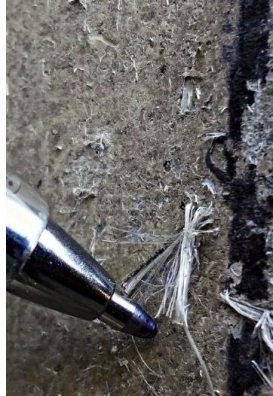
*Aedes aegypti* lives in tropical and subtropical climates - it is why experts are worried Zika could spread across the Americas, a huge swathe of Africa as well as India and China.

However, the similar *Aedes albopictus* - or Asian Tiger mosquito - likes cooler more temperate areas. It has been linked to outbreaks of chikungunya virus in Italy and France. There are suspicions that it could also spread Zika virus, but it is not yet clear.

Mosquitos were virtually wiped out in the early sixties in the Americas following a successful eradication campaign. But insecticide resistance and a lack of political will led to the mosquito rebounding.

But now far more people live in its preferred urban home and a similar achievement would require a huge effort.

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## Involving your workforce in health and safety



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published HSG263 'Involving your workforce in health and safety – guidance for all workplaces. The guide is mainly aimed at medium to large employers. It will help them in their legal duty to consult and involve their employees on health and safety matters. Small businesses may find the guidance helpful, particularly the case studies, as will employees, their health and safety representatives and trade unions.

The guide concentrates on examples of how to comply with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended), and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (as amended).

The guide is designed to clearly distinguish different types of information so you can find the parts that are relevant for you. References to the regulations are colour-coded.

This version has been updated to clarify examples of how to comply with the Regulations and to update links and references to other guidance.

The document can be accessed at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg263.htm>

## Fruit farm fined for safety failings at farm

A Kent based fruit farm has been fined for safety failings after the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), visited the site following a RIDDOR reportable incident.

Following this reported incident an investigation by the HSE found that on 22 December 2014 a self-employed contractor working at PSL, accessed a door for repair by standing in an apple box raised at height by a fork lift truck.

Sevenoaks Magistrates Court heard that PSL had been allowing roof work to be undertaken with no controls or training specific to the tasks.

Paynes Stores Ltd, of Swanton Farm, Bicknor, Sittingbourne Kent, was fined a total of £18,600 and ordered to pay a further £9,173 in costs after pleading guilty to breaches of Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Regulation 9(3) of the Working at Height Regulations.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Joanne Williams commented: "Death and serious injury following falls from the edge of roofs or through fragile materials are all too common and proper planning is vital to ensure the work is carried out safely and the correct precautions are identified and used."



"I hope this prosecution makes it clear to employers that they need to properly manage the risks of working at height and that HSE will not hesitate to take action against those who fall short of the law in such a way."

## Construction firms sentenced after culvert collapse injures worker



A group of doctors and health experts is urging the House of Lords to support a bill to lower the drink-driving limit across the whole of the UK. They want England, Wales and Northern Ireland brought in line with Scotland.

The bill proposes amending the 1988 Road Traffic Act to lower the blood-alcohol concentration limit from 80mg alcohol per 100ml of blood to 50mg. The government said the current limit struck a balance between safety and personal freedom.

The bill, which will be debated in the Lords will also proposes lowering the limits for alcohol in breath and urine when driving a vehicle.

Because everyone has a different susceptibility to alcohol, health experts say it is difficult to quantify exactly how many units can be drunk before reaching the proposed new limit. For the average man, it would be just under a pint of beer or a large glass of wine and for women, half a pint of beer or a small glass of wine.

In a letter to the Times, the Alcohol Health Alliance said the move would save lives and improve road safety. The alliance, which is made up of organisations including the Royal College of Physicians, the British Medical Association and Alcohol Concern, said that at the current limit, drivers are six times more likely to die in a road traffic accident than those who have not drunk any alcohol.

Scotland lowered its drink-driving limit to the proposed new level in December 2014 and police figures show that drink-drive offences there fell by 17% in the first three months of 2015.

Northern Ireland is currently consulting on whether to lower its limit. At present, England, Wales and Northern Ireland have one of the highest drink-driving limits in Europe.

The World Health Organization recommends a limit of 50mg/100ml.



## Poundworld fined for non-reflective hi-vis vests

Poundworld has been fined over £63,000 after it sold non reflective hi-vis jackets, with the logo 'be safe, be seen'. More than 95,000 of the vests had been sold for £1, but tests carried out by trading standards revealed that the reflective nature of the jackets was no more than 2.4 per cent of what it should have been.

Joe Tyler, Hertfordshire Trading Standards, bought the jacket from Poundworld on Watford High Street. He said: "Whilst the produce purported to be a high visibility safety vest, it was in fact no such thing. It was little more than an item of clothing....Neither the fluorescent yellow background material or the retro-reflective strips were of a standard anywhere near that which was necessary to ensure the visibility of the user."

In response to Trading Standards' questions, Poundworld said the vest that was tested was part of a batch of 7,200, but over a period beginning in January 2010 it had imported and sold 95,700.

The company pleaded guilty to two offences of engaging in misleading commercial practice. Stan Reiz, defending, said the Chinese manufacturers had provided test certificates that were misleading to Poundworld. He said there had been no complaints or safety incidents reported. But he said: "The company admits it fell short of due diligence. It has now changed its policies and has increased its UK test centres."

Judge John Plumstead fined Poundworld £15,000 and ordered it to pay £42,395.10 in an agreed confiscation order as well as £6,123.16 prosecution costs. He said: "People would have gone out of the shop believing they had improved the safety of their children or themselves when out after dark on foot or on a bicycle. "The fine demonstrates the court's disapproval of those who put on the market safety aids that are not safety aids at all."

The jacket was withdrawn from sale on June 5 2014 and the national recall took place in January this year.

## Three companies fined following a fall from height

Three companies have been fined a total of £90,000 after a worker was seriously injured when he fell nearly six metres from a platform with unguarded rails. Southwark Crown Court heard that on 4 March 2013 two workers accessed the top level of a unit which was to be dismantled as part of construction work at a site in Westferry Road, London. One of the workers slipped and fell over the side of the platform, hitting the wall and then landing on the concrete floor 5.9 metres below. He sustained multiple injuries including internal bleeding, a collapsed lung, and fractures to his pelvis and right arm and has been left unable to work.



Meta Management Services Limited (trading as Aktrion), of Rutland Court, Edinburgh, who was the principal contractor for the project, pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 22(1)(c) of the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2007 and was fined £9,000 with £1,942 in costs. Goss Graphic Systems Limited of Beech House, The Oaks Business Park, Longridge Road, Preston, pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 13(2) of the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2007, and Regulation 4 of the Working at Height Regulation 2005 and was fined a total of £27,000 with costs of £7,000. Beck and Pollitzer Engineering Limited of Burnham Road, Dartford, Kent pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 4 of the Working at Height Regulation 2005 and was fined £54,000 with costs of £14,000.

## Construction firms sentenced after culvert collapse injures worker

Two building companies have been fined after a man was seriously injured when a structure that allows water to flow under roads collapsed on him.

Maidstone Crown Court heard that Kent County Council appointed Enterprise to replace an old, damaged, brick culvert under Tudely Lane Tonbridge. Enterprise in turn appointed Topbond to do the majority of the work.

A culvert is an embedded structure, usually surround by soil and can be made from steel, brick or reinforced concrete or other material and is used to transport water underground from one side of a road or railway to another.



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) told the court that on 27 January 2012 water was being pumped out of the work area when three workers including 63-year-old Michael Skitt of Kingsnorth, Ashford, entered the area between two culverts in order to clear a channel for the remaining water to flow toward the pump head. They had begun to clear loose material, but had not started digging. Shortly after they entered the area, the old brick culvert collapsed. One man jumped clear, another was hit but managed to release himself, but Michael Skitt was trapped and injured. Mr Skitt suffered multiple injuries including shoulder blade breaks, an open shin break and a dislocated knee. Ongoing issues with his foot may see him need further operations. Mr Skitt spent 26 days in hospital and has now had to give up full time work and walks with a stick.

HSE said the stability of the structure was not assessed adequately, nor sufficient planning undertaken to ensure adequate control measures were in place. Its investigation found that originally the old culvert was to be totally demolished early in the work, when this was changed the implications of uncovering half of the damaged culvert and therefore loading it unevenly and undermining it were not managed.

Although culvert repair/replacement is a relatively unusual construction job, the collapse of excavations and structures is common and the court heard the defendants in the case were made aware of the potential of collapse by the original designers/engineers several times. The culvert could have been demolished early in the work, failing this, there are a number of commonly used ways to support structures during construction work.

Enterprise (AOL) Ltd of the Sherard Building, Edmund Halley Road, Oxford admitted breaches of section 22 (1) and 28 (1) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2007. They were fined a total of £90,000 and ordered to pay an additional £22,876 costs. Construction firm Topbond PLC, of Oyster Quay, Castle Road, Sittingbourne, Kent admitted breaches of section 13 (1) and 28 (1) of the same regulations. They were also ordered to pay £22,876.60 costs and were fined £70,000

## Power company fined £1m after runner electrocuted

A company which maintains the power distribution supplies to London, the South East and East of England has been fined £1million after a runner was electrocuted by a low-hanging high voltage power cable.

Dr James Kew was running on land in Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex, when he came into contact with a cable which should have been 5.5 metres above ground.

Chelmsford Crown Court heard the high voltage cable was only 1.5m above ground (at its lowest point), straddling a well-used footpath, after parts of a porcelain insulator disintegrated on a wooden pole supporting the power cable.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated the circumstances and prosecuted UK Power Networks (Operations) Ltd (UKPN).

HSE found that, on 24 July 2012, an insulator on a pole mounted, overhead high voltage power line had failed. This resulted in a conductor falling to 1.5 metres above a cornfield. The conductor was still connected to the power supply, energised at 11KV and was now suspended across the public footpath.

The situation was reported to National Grid by members of the public, which in turn passed the information to UKPN. UKPN spoke with the members of the public who raised the alarm and were told of the conductor's location and the danger it posed.

UKPN could have immediately 'de-energised' that part of the network, but did not do so. Instead, it dispatched a technician to the scene. Twenty minutes before the technician arrived (less than half an hour after the incident was reported), Dr James Kew ran into the live conductor and was electrocuted.

The HSE investigation found that the UKPN failed to fully assess the risk posed to members of the public, nor did it immediately de-energise the powerline and control the risk.

UK Power Networks (Operations) Limited was fined £1million, and ordered to pay full prosecution costs of £153,459 after pleading guilty to a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

After the hearing, HSE Principal Inspector Paul Carter said: "Dr Kew's family remains completely devastated by their loss and witnesses to this incident have suffered severe trauma and stress-related illness. The incident was entirely preventable'...Distribution network operators have an absolute duty to ensure that they do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of members of the public who may be put at risk by the operation of their undertakings....The risks posed by high voltage conductors which descend below the safe statutory height is entirely foreseeable and network operators must have robust procedures in place that facilitate dynamic risk assessment and the immediate implementation of effective risk control measures to protect the public."



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