

## *DPHHS HAN*

# *Information Service*

## Cover Sheet

**DATE:** May 21, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Hantavirus and Water Safety in Montana

### INSTRUCTIONS:

***REDISTRIBUTE AT YOUR DISCRETION.*** Share this information with relevant SMEs or contacts (internal and external) as you see fit. **Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own.**

**For LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT reference only**

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

**DPHHS CDCP  
Epidemiology Section  
1-406-444-0273  
Food and Consumer Safety  
1-406-444-0067**

**DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:  
1-800-701-5769**

**DPHHS HAN Website:  
[www.han.mt.gov](http://www.han.mt.gov)**

**Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own.**

**Please ensure that DPHHS is included on your HAN distribution list.**

### Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Information Service:** passes along low level priority messages that do not fit other HAN categories and are for informational purposes only.

**Please call DPHHS to update contact information at 444-0919**

**DPHHS policy is to forward all HAN messages from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

# ***DPHHS HAN***

## **Information Sheet**



**Date:** May 21, 2013

**Subject:** Two Info Service Messages for DPHHS News Releases

**Information:** DPHHS is distributing two press releases, one regarding recent hantavirus deaths and another informing the public of water safety.

Attached is the press release for Hanta Virus that will be going out from DPHHS. You may be receiving calls regarding Hantavirus or may want to do your own messaging locally and the resources for this can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/> Please work with your local providers to make them aware of the need to rule out Hanta by history or clinically. In addition, we have a surveillance snapshot available with some Montana specific information at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/documents/April2011-Hantavirus.pdf>

Also attached is the news release for water safety. Recreational Water Illness and Injury prevention week occurs every year during the week before Memorial Day (May 20-26<sup>th</sup>). The attached press release provides national and Montana specific data related to drowning and cryptosporidiosis outbreaks; the leading causes of injury and illness, as well as tips on how to stay safe this summer. Please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/> for more information.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2013

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936  
Chuck Council, Communications Specialist, DPHHS, (406) 444-4391

# Health officials confirm Montana Hantavirus death

Health officials in Carbon and Gallatin counties confirmed two new cases of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) and the first HPS related death in Montana in 2013. A resident of Gallatin County in her twenties is the 10<sup>th</sup> reported death in Montana due to the virus since 1993. The second case is in a male in his forties from Carbon County. Both persons appear to have recent rodent exposures.

These two new cases increase to 37 the number of Hantavirus cases reported in Montana since 1993. Montana typically sees one or two cases a year and is second only to New Mexico in the number of cases per 100,000 population.

“Montanans should be aware of the precautions they can take to avoid Hantavirus and the rodents that can carry it,” said DPHHS Director Richard H. Opper. “People can contract the illness when they breathe in air contaminated by the virus. It is important to avoid actions that raise dust, such as sweeping or vacuuming if signs of rodents are present. We are coming up on long holiday weekends and people will be out cleaning up their garages, sheds and summer cabins. Protecting yourself and cleaning correctly is essential.”

Hantavirus is not transmitted from person to person. The greatest risk is associated with exposure to rodent feces in closed, dry areas. All Montanans can protect themselves from Hantavirus by taking some simple precautions.

“The risk here is mostly for people who live, sleep, work or play in closed areas where mice or other rodents also live,” said DPHHS State Medical Officer Dr. Steven Helgerson. “For people who fall into that category, it is always important to take precautions.”

While Hantavirus cases can occur during any month, spring and summer months present more opportunities for exposure as people clean cabins, outbuildings and campers or recreate outdoors and come in contact with mouse and rat nesting materials.

According to Dr. Helgerson, early symptoms of Hantavirus infection include fever and muscle aches, and sometimes chills, headache and vomiting. Within a few days, symptoms progress to coughing and severe shortness of breath. The symptoms develop one to six weeks after exposure.

“Early recognition by individuals and providers tied to immediate medical care are key to surviving the illness,” Helgerson said. “If someone is exposed to rodents and experiences symptoms- especially severe shortness of breath, they need to seek treatment right away. Telling your doctor about any rodent exposure will alert your physician to look closely for any rodent-carried disease, such as Hantavirus”.

The best way to prevent Hantavirus transmission is to control rodent populations in areas where one lives and works. When cleaning areas where rodents may nest, the following precautions should be followed:

- Wear rubber or plastic gloves
- Thoroughly spray/soak area with a disinfectant or mixture of 1.5 cups of bleach to a gallon of water to disinfect and reduce dry dusty conditions in the area being cleaned
- Wipe or mop the area with a sponge or paper towel (throw away items after use)
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after removing gloves
- **Never sweep or vacuum in these areas as this can stir up dust and aerosolize the droppings**

For more information about Hantavirus go to <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/index.shtml>

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May 21, 2013

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936

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## DPHHS: Enjoy fun in the water, but be safe

The Department of Public Health and Human Services is reminding Montanans to be safe and stay healthy this upcoming Memorial Day weekend and throughout summer while out enjoying fun in the water.

Drowning deaths are most common in Montana between June and August and are more likely to occur in natural bodies of water. Montana averages 8 deaths per year due to drowning in natural waters. Every day, two children under the age of 14 years die from drowning in the United States.

“Summer in Montana for so many includes swimming and boating at one of our many rivers and lakes,” said DPHHS Director Richard Opper. “For the most part, people are able to have a safely enjoy these activities. However, every year there are drowning deaths and even one drowning death in Montana is one too many.”

Here are a few simple lifesaving tips to stay safe this summer:

- **Learn life-saving skills.** Everyone should know the basics of swimming (floating, moving through the water) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Make life jackets a "must."** Make sure kids wear life jackets in and around natural bodies of water, such as rivers or lakes, even if they know how to swim. Life jackets can be used in and around pools for weaker swimmers too.
- **Be on the lookout.** When kids are in or near water (including bathtubs), closely supervise them at all times. Adults watching kids in or near water should avoid distracting activities like playing cards, reading books, talking on the phone, and using alcohol or drugs.

Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are also a concern, DPHHS officials say. Every year, thousands of Americans get sick with RWIs, which are caused by germs found in places where people swim. Cryptosporidium is one of the most frequent causes of waterborne disease among humans in the United States.

On average, Montana has about 60 cases of cryptosporidiosis a year with a seasonal peak during summer months. The most extreme outbreak in recent years occurred in 2006 when two

cryptosporidiosis outbreaks were associated with recreational water, in particular splash parks, sickening over 180 people.

“People need to be aware that chlorine and other pool water treatments don’t kill germs instantly,” said Melanie Shaw of the DPHHS Food and Consumer Safety Section, which oversees the licensing and inspection of public swimming pools. “We all share the water we swim in, and we each need to do our part to keep ourselves, our families, and our friends healthy.”

To help protect yourself and other swimmers from germs, here are a few simple and effective steps all swimmers can take to stay healthy:

- Shower with soap before entering pool.
- Don’t swim when you have diarrhea.
- Don’t swallow pool water.
- Take children on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes or check diapers every 30-60 minutes.
- Supervise swimmers, especially young and inexperienced ones. Be a role model for others.
- Use life vests where applicable.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs while swimming.

For more information about healthy swimming, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/)