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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DOH CAUTIONS TRAVELERS HEADED  
TO 2016 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES  
ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS AND URGES PREVENTION**

HONOLULU – With the 2016 Summer Olympic Games set to begin at the end of this week in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is cautioning all travelers, especially Hawaii residents, to take preventive measures against being bitten by mosquitoes while there, because of the ongoing Zika outbreak in that country.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently has posted a Level 2 Travel Alert, advising travelers to the Olympic Games to practice enhanced precautions while in Brazil. CDC is also recommending that women who are pregnant not attend the Olympics because of the risk Zika poses to a developing fetus. Zika has been linked to cases of microcephaly, a serious birth defect that causes a baby to be born with a smaller than normal sized head because of abnormal brain development, which can result in medical problems and impaired development.

“We wish Hawaii residents going to Brazil for the Olympic Games safe travels, and urge them to heed travel warnings by preparing carefully and doing what they can to prevent mosquito bites,” said Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler. “If people avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, they will substantially reduce their risks of contracting Zika virus and bringing it back to Hawaii. We don’t have locally transmitted Zika here, and we must do whatever we can to keep it that way.”

Travelers returning to Hawaii from areas affected by Zika and other mosquito-borne viruses are advised that if they become ill within two weeks of returning home, they should consult and be assessed by their healthcare provider.

While there have been no cases among persons who have been infected by mosquitoes in Hawaii, our state has been identified as a high risk area for experiencing local Zika spread because of our year-round warm temperatures and consistently high travel rates, both into and out of the state. Florida is also identified as a high-risk state for local Zika transmission, and recently confirmed its first cases of locally-acquired Zika. These cases are the first instances of locally transmitted Zika in the United States.

Local mosquitoes can become infected when they bite an infected human. Active local transmission begins when infected local mosquitoes infect the humans they bite. Zika can also be spread from an infected pregnant woman to her unborn child before or during birth and from an infected person to their sexual partners.

To protect against contracting Zika, especially during travel to Brazil for the Olympics, or other locations with local mosquito-borne transmission, DOH recommends the following precautions:

- Apply EPA-registered insect repellent containing 20-30 percent DEET, especially if outdoors.
- Wear protective clothing, such as light-colored long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and shoes.
- Avoid activities outdoors at sunrise and sunset when mosquitoes are most active.
- Avoid areas with mosquitoes, such as shady, damp locations or standing water.

For travel notices and information related to Zika, visit the CDC's Zika Travel Information page at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>. For more information about Zika virus, visit DOH's Disease Outbreak and Control Division's website at [http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/zika\\_virus/](http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/zika_virus/). Additional resources about DOH's efforts to raise awareness about mosquito-borne disease prevention in Hawaii can be located at [FightTheBiteHawaii.com](http://FightTheBiteHawaii.com).

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