



Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley
Council Policy Manual
OSH 12

POLICY No:	OSH 12
DIVISION:	Occupational Safety and Health
SUBJECT:	Mosquito Borne Diseases
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Manager Engineering and Development Services
ENABLING LEGISLATION:	Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984

OBJECTIVE:

This policy is designed to ensure that those who work for the Council do so in an environment which, as far as is practicable, is free from hazards. This policy aims to established guidelines which will help reduce the risk of mosquito borne diseases that staff many become exposed to whilst performing their normal duties. The Department of Health recommends that residents and visitors to the East Kimberley region take extra precautions against mosquito borne diseases such as Australian Encephalitis (AE), Ross River Virus (RR) and Barmah Forest (BF) during and after the wet season. Accordingly, if required during working hours, employees shall be provided with mosquito repellent and appropriate clothing (long sleeved shirts and long trousers).

POLICY:

Mosquito borne diseases - Background

Only one in 500 people infected by the bite of a mosquito actually develop symptoms of Australian Encephalitis, which include severe headache and neck stiffness, fever, delirium and coma. In severe cases the disease can be fatal and if not, can lead to permanent brain damage. The people most likely to be affected by Australian Encephalitis are newcomers to the areas, such as babies, young children and tourists.

Humans infected with Ross River virus or Barman Forest virus may contract the clinical condition known as polyarthritis. The effects of these viruses range from a symptomless condition, through to a transient rash and mild illness with fever, to polyarthritis affecting chiefly the ankles, fingers, knees, and wrists, but other joints may be affected. The disease is not fatal. For Ross River virus, symptoms become evident from 3-21 days (average 9 days) after infection, and mild cases may recover in less than one month but may persist for months to years. People of working age are most likely to be afflicted with the diseases, whilst symptoms are rare in children.

There is no cure for Australian Encephalitis, Ross River or Barmah Forest virus, so the only action that can be taken is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.



Prevention of Mosquito Bites

Effective mosquito control in the East Kimberley is usually not possible because of the large size and inaccessibility of wet season mosquito breeding areas.

Employees can take care to prevent mosquito bites by:

- Avoiding being outside at times when mosquitoes are most active, from sunset to mid-evening (roster work accordingly where possible);
- Covering up as much as possible with loose clothing (mosquitoes can bite through tight fitting clothes);
- Keeping a bottle of repellent handy to put on exposed areas of skin when mosquitoes are active and ensuring the flyscreens in houses and caravans are in a good state of repair;
- If camping out, either sleep in a mosquito-proof tent or under a mosquito net. Repellents only protect against mosquito bites for up to four hours, not all night.

Employee's responsibility

If an employee has been provided with insect repellent, it is their responsibility to ensure that they wear the repellent at all times when outdoors. The instructions which are displayed on the repellent must be followed to ensure that it is used in the most effective manor. If an allergic reaction to the repellent occurs, employees must stop applying the repellent and report directly to their supervisor for medical assistance. The repellent is not to be reapplied until consultation with a registered medical practitioner has occurred.