

RC/PIO News & Notes 9-12-2025



FROM Eric Jens, GA DPH Risk Communicator
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News and Notes

Highlights this week include the quarterly statewide DPH risk communicators meeting, the monthly state Board of Health meeting, and more.

September 11

Twenty-four years and 24-hours ago began a tragedy that America will never forget. The intentional airplane crashes killed nearly 3,000 people, injured nearly 6,000 more and impacted an entire country as the terrorist acts unfolded. Memorial events were held throughout the U.S. and Georgia to remember the victims and the heroes of September 11, 2001.



State Board of Health meeting

State Board of Health members reflected on the current state of vaccination efforts among other impacts to public health infrastructure on the federal, state and local level at the start of their monthly meeting held Tuesday. Dr. Cherie Drenzek presented the board with the latest situation and potential forecast for the flu and the (New World) Screwworm, which has been impacting countries just to the south of the U.S. and posing a threat to animals and people closer to home. An EMS overview was provided by Megan Andrews, and new director of the Public Health Laboratory Ellen Kersh talked about lab activities and testing statistics.

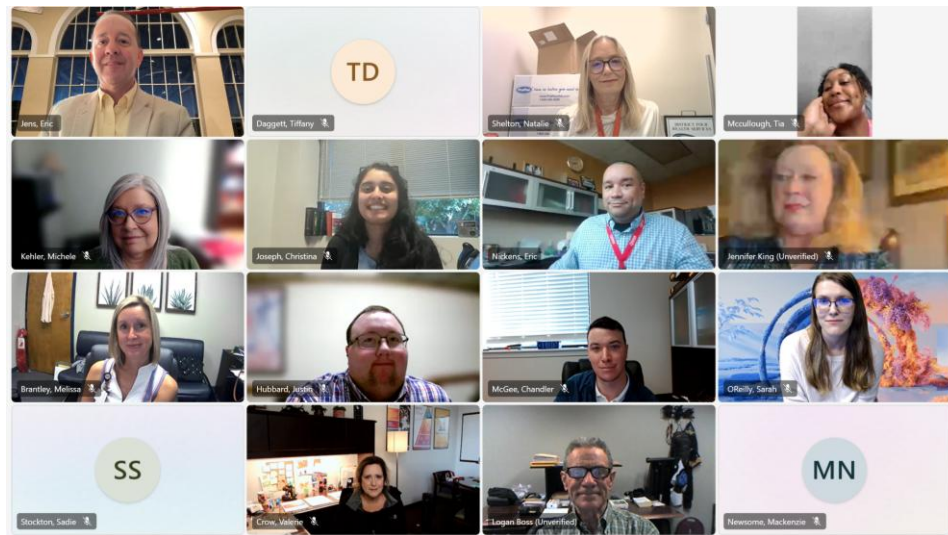
Where is New World Screwworm Found?

- Historically, New World Screwworm has been found throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South America.
- First recognized in the US in Texas in 1842 and translocated to Florida in 1933.
- Because of the economic losses, in the 1950s, the USDA developed the **Sterile Insect Technique**, in which radiation was used to sterilize male flies and then release them ("biological barrier").
- **This successfully eradicated NWS** in the US in the 60s, in Mexico in the 80s, and in Central America in the early 2000s.



Risk Communicators quarterly meeting

Thanks to all those who attended, presented and/or participated in Tuesday's quarterly statewide DPH risk communicators meeting. We heard about exercise opportunities including full-scale exercises for BioWatch and Vigilant Guard this year from Saneika Thomas. Any district that wants to learn more or get involved in the play for these exercises is encouraged to reach out. Thanks to those who already have. Leah Hoffacker provided an update on impact statements and other initiatives related to the PHEP program. Mackenzie Newsome walked us through the updated components and format to the state DPH Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications plan. She also directed us to The Knack resource library where templates for this plan and the CERC plan itself will soon be housed. Frederick Dobard-Gary responded to questions about on-line accessibility requirements that go into effect next April. We had 26 at the meeting representing 16 of 18 health districts.



Next Week Preview

The monthly state DPH EPR in-person meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday morning. I will be on annual leave for the first half of the week, so if anyone is going to this meeting, or has any other activities to spotlight next week, please send pictures, bullet-point information or whatever you may have captured. Thanks. All contributions will help next week's edition from taking on an abundance of malaise.

About "News & Notes"

"News & Notes" is a weekly communication aimed at risk communicators and public information officers within Georgia's 18 public health districts. The goal of the communication is to increase preparedness through the exchange of information about significant events, training and other planned activities. Some information herein may be considered FYUO or For Your Use Only. Please be judicious when forwarding. For questions, comments or to submit information for inclusion, contact Eric Jens at Eric.Jens@dph.ga.gov