

**Focus on...**

## Investigating Hantavirus in Yosemite



Nine visitors to Yosemite National Park this past summer became infected with hantavirus, three of whom died. The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) [Occupational Health Branch](#) (OHB) has been working with other infectious disease specialists at CDPH and federal agencies to investigate this unusual outbreak.

Wild mice, such as deer mice that live in the Sierra and much of western United States, can carry hantavirus in their droppings and urine. People can inhale the virus when mouse droppings or urine mix with dust and become airborne.

"It is the largest outbreak of hantavirus that we've seen. We're looking at it as a unique opportunity to learn more about this condition, how exposure happens and how to prevent it," said Barbara Materna, OHB chief.

No park employee has yet been found to have hantavirus infection. In order to better understand employee exposure to mice and the possibility of undetected past hantavirus infection, OHB tested more than 550 Yosemite National Park employees who volunteered to participate.

Park employees answered a 50-question survey and gave a small sample of blood. The questionnaire covered work activities, living environment, past exposures to mice, and training and knowledge about measures to prevent hantavirus infection. Individual employees will receive a letter with their test results as soon as they are available. OHB will analyze results from the laboratory tests and questionnaires, and produce a publicly available report in the coming months.

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### Resources

[Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome](#)  
[Hantavirus outbreak in Yosemite](#)

**OHB** improves California worker health and safety through prevention activities. We gather information on job hazards, test new approaches to prevent worker injury and illness, and help make changes at the workplace.

Email [OHW@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:OHW@cdph.ca.gov) with feedback about this update or change of address.



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