

Focus on...

Work-Related Hantavirus Exposures in Yosemite

In the summer of 2012, ten overnight visitors to Yosemite National Park became infected with a form of hantavirus, and eight developed a serious illness known as hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS); three died.

No Yosemite employees were known to have HPS, but they were concerned about the visitor illnesses and the potential risk to employees.



The [Occupational Health Branch \(OHB\)](#) of the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) participated in an investigation, offering blood tests and surveys to over 500 employees who volunteered. OHB found that many employees commonly encountered and cleaned up mice infestations at work.

People are mainly exposed to the virus by inhaling it when mouse droppings or urine mix with dust and become airborne. Only one employee tested positive for previous hantavirus infection but did not report illness symptoms during 2012. It is not possible to determine when the infection occurred.

Unlike employees, the visitors were exposed to the virus while lodging in Signature Tent Cabins. These tent cabins were found to be infested with deer mice inside the walls and were later demolished.

OHB determined, however, that hantavirus exposure remains an ongoing risk to employees. The OHB survey results showed that Yosemite employees did not universally know or follow established protective measures. OHB recommends that enhanced vigilance is necessary to adequately protect employees from future exposure.

Resources

[Yosemite hantavirus investigation key findings and recommendations](#)
[Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome](#)

[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 with feedback about this update or change of address.



Occupational Health Branch
CA Department of Public Health
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