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MEDIA ADVISORY

DATE: June 26, 2007

If it Breeds... It Leads! **Battling Dirty Swimming Pools from the Air**

Green, smelly swimming pools may not be big news, but the millions of mosquitoes they can breed are. Often hidden from public view, these improperly maintained swimming pools are a major source of disease transmitting mosquitoes in urban areas. Adding to that, declining home sales and higher foreclosure rates are creating a problem for mosquito control professionals across the State as homes remain unoccupied, and their pools improperly maintained, for longer periods.

During California's 2004 West Nile epidemic, Pasadena Police Department helicopter pilots could see hundreds of green pools from the sky – and they were concerned. Three years later, one of the most successful joint venture will again take to the skies in search of these backyard mosquito breeding grounds in the San Gabriel Valley.

“Operation West Nile” is the partnership between the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District and the Foothill Air Support Team (FAST).

Commander Paul Gales of the Pasadena Police Department is pleased provide air support for this successful program. “FAST is one of the largest regional helicopter operations in the San Gabriel Valley and has the airborne assets and manpower to assist the district in this effort and still support our regional airborne law enforcement partnerships”.

Mosquito control personnel team up with flight crews to identify and photograph dirty pools from the air. FAST helicopters are equipped with high tech Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Los Angeles County Tax Assessors Geographical Information System which give precise address locations. Once identified, residents can expect a knock at their door as District technicians follow up on the dirty pools spotted from above.

Improperly maintained pools/spas that breed mosquitoes violate both local and State health and safety codes leaving property owners liable for stiff penalties of up to \$1,000 per day if these sites are not corrected.

Steve West, Manager of the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District is proud of this partnership. "This is government at its best. We have two proactive government agencies combining their unique resources to battle a significant community issue."

A similar exercise last year identified nearly 200 dirty pools in the 23 cities served by the District. "At the rate mosquitoes reproduce – literally billions of mosquitoes were eliminated from our neighborhoods" noted Kenn Fujioka, the District's Assistant Manager. He adds, "There is no better way to battle a disease like West Nile virus, than to break the mosquito's life cycle."

MEDIA INVITATION

WHO: Steve West, Manager, San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District; Commander Paul Gales, Pasadena Police Department

WHAT: "Operation West Nile" Joint Helicopter Surveillance Program lift off – helicopters will take to the skies to search for "green" pools

WHEN: Wednesday, June 27, 2007 at 10:00 AM
Thursday, June 28, 2007 at 10:00 AM
Additional dates TBD

WHY: West Nile virus is a significant health issue. Finding hidden mosquito breeding sites is a critical step to reduce the incidence of human illness this year.

WHERE: Pasadena Police Department Heliport
2175 Yucca Lane
Altadena, CA 91001

VISUALS: Staging area for lift off of the FAST Helicopters; Opportunity for media shots from the air aboard secondary helicopter; Helicopters and GPS equipment used for surveillance.

The San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District is a non-profit public health agency dedicated to the control of mosquito and other vector-borne diseases. The District can be reached at 626-814-9466 or on the web at www.sgvmosquito.org

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