

# *U.S. State of Florida Declares Emergency Over Zika Spread*

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Miami, February 4 (RHC)-- The U.S. state of Florida has declared a health emergency over spread of the Zika virus in the United States. Governor Rick Scott announced a state of emergency in four counties -- Miami-Dade, Lee, Hillsborough, and Santa Rosa on Wednesday.

There have so far been nine cases of the virus in the state all contracted through mosquitoes in people who have traveled to Latin America and the Caribbean, where the virus is present.

"Although Florida's current nine Zika cases were travel-related, we have to ensure Florida is prepared and stays ahead of the spread of the Zika virus in our state," the governor said in a statement. "We know that we must be prepared for the worst even as we hope for the best."

Based on the order, the state's agriculture department takes measures, such as spraying against mosquitoes.

Forty-eight cases of the virus have been reported across the country, at least one of which was sexually transmitted.

The virus has been reported in more than 30 countries and is linked with a surge in cases of microcephaly, an untreatable condition in which babies are born with abnormally small head and

undeveloped brain.

Florida is, therefore, particularly focused on pregnant women who have been advised not to travel to areas where the virus is present. The World Health Organization has warned that the virus is "spreading explosively" in South America and could infect millions of people.

Although the symptoms of the virus are relatively mild and only 1 in 5 persons exposed to it become ill, those who are experiencing fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (pink eye) have been strongly advised to seek immediate medical care.

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