



Santa Barbara County
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Health Matters Newsletter

www.sbcphd.org

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Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow

Santa Barbara County experienced unprecedented natural disasters at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. We witnessed the devastating effects of the Thomas Fire and the Montecito debris flow. It affected our entire community directly or indirectly. All know about the incidents, but many are unaware of health aspects. Public Health Department employees put aside their daily work to focus on urgent emergency response.



Below are some of the services provided by the Public Health Department in conjunction with our partners:

- Inspecting all destroyed and damaged properties to remove household hazardous materials (paint, petroleum products, pesticides, etc.). Over 10,000 pounds of hazardous materials were removed separately from other debris.
- Testing ocean water a minimum of weekly and reporting results to the public. The Health Officer closed ocean water at a number of beaches due to high bacterial levels.
- Providing guidance and permits to businesses to re-open with accommodations related to boil water orders. This was done on an individual business basis.
- Rescuing and providing shelter for animals in evacuated areas. Over 1,800 animals were cared for during the fire and about 1,000 animals were cared for or rescued following the debris flow. Animal Control Officers went into homes to care for animals left behind.
- Assisting a number of skilled nursing facilities and facilities with vulnerable populations. There were meetings and communication to coordinate evacuation and re-population.
- Providing health guidance on cleaning up mud for first responders and for the residents and businesses.
- Providing guidance and escorts for individuals with special health needs in the evacuation areas, such as getting medication and obtaining dialysis.
- Communicating information to many health related questions at community meetings, press conferences, and Emergency Operations Center.
- Staffing the Emergency Operations Center and Joint Information Center (often 24 hours/day), the Local Assistance Center, and Call Center.
- Disseminating relevant public information, providing media interviews, answering calls from the public, and creating public documents.
- Staffing the Red Cross evacuation center with nurses on a daily basis to meet, assess, and address health needs.
- Distributing approximately 350,000 N95 masks throughout the county when the air quality was poor over an extended period of time.
- Planning for the safety of Public Health Department staff who worked in the field in sometimes less than safe conditions.
- Implementing solutions during power outages and transportation with a closed highway.

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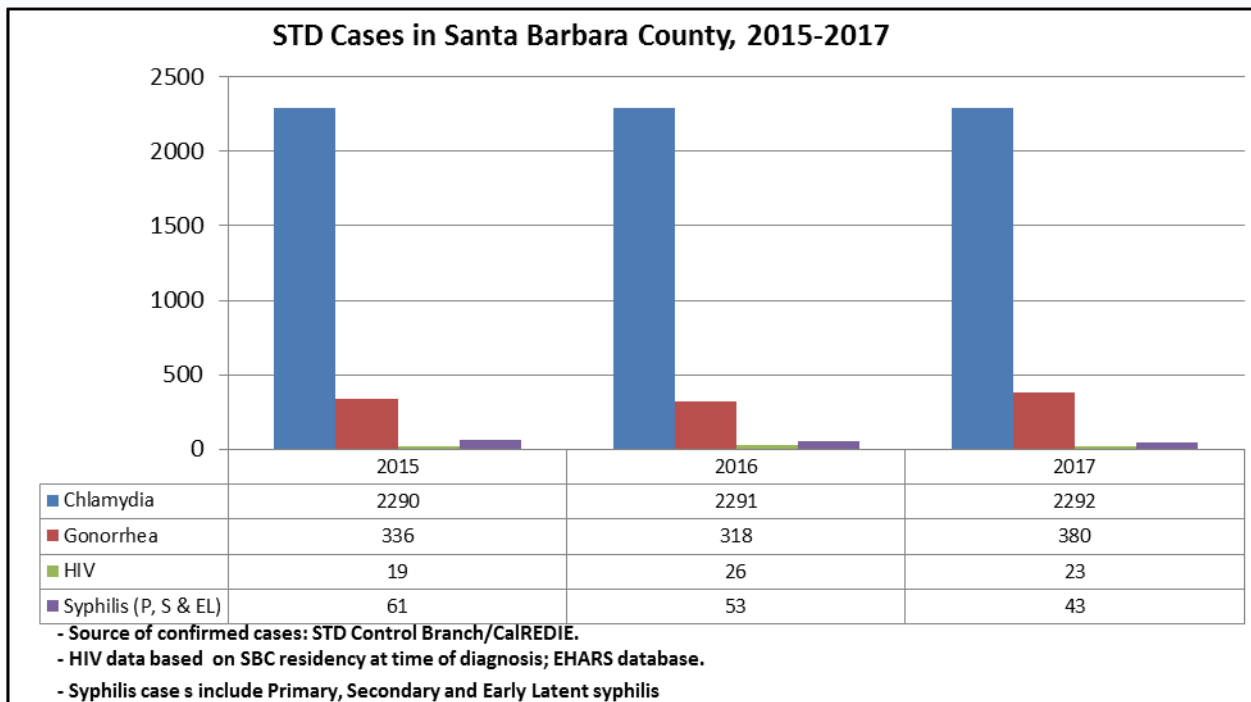
Michelle Wehmer, MPH
Epidemiologist

April is Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Awareness Month: “Treat Me Right”

Each year in April the Santa Barbara County Health Department recognizes STD Awareness Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about local trends in STD infections and to elicit support with public health prevention efforts. This year’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) theme for STD Awareness Month is “Treat Me Right,” a message for both patients and providers. The CDC is reaching out to foster trusting patient-provider relationships. Patients are encouraged to learn about what they can do to stay safe and healthy, and how to directly ask their provider for the care that they need and deserve. The CDC is raising awareness so that patients are prepared to discuss their sexual history with providers and learn how to start the conversation if their provider doesn’t bring up sexual history. The CDC is also encouraging providers to put the focus on their relationships with patients so they can deliver unbiased, quality care.



In Santa Barbara County, the incidence of gonorrhea cases have continued to increase, while chlamydia has remained steady and syphilis has been slowly declining. Although HIV case counts have been stable, actual AIDS numbers are on the decline. This epidemiological shift is attributed to the work of providers to ensure comprehensive STD screening and HIV testing; hence assuring prompt treatment and linkages to HIV care. For more information on local STD epidemiological data, please visit our website at: <http://cosb.countyofsb.org/phd/epi.aspx?id=23610>



The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department thanks you for your ongoing support to keep your patients and our community healthy. Please contact our Disease Control Office at (805) 681-5280 or visit our website at www.sbcphd.org/dcp for any questions regarding STD or communicable disease reporting or screening questions.

Epidemiology Program Updates

- 2017 Year-end Reportable Communicable Diseases Counts for the County: <http://cosb.countyofsb.org/phd/epi.aspx?id=23610>
- Other updated reports available on the Epidemiology Reports webpage: <http://cosb.countyofsb.org/phd/epi.aspx?id=40517>

