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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

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**Department of Health Announces Fatal Hantavirus Case in McKinley County Resident**  
*Case is Fourth in New Mexico This Year*

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Health Department announced today that a 23-year-old man from McKinley County has died from Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). This is the fourth case of HPS in New Mexico this year.

“We extend our sympathy to this gentleman’s family and friends,” said Cabinet Secretary Dr. Catherine Torres. “I am advising all New Mexicans to follow our prevention guidelines to keep themselves and their families safe, as HPS can be a serious and sometimes fatal disease.”

Early symptoms of Hantavirus infection are fever and muscle aches, possibly with chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and cough which progresses to respiratory distress. These symptoms develop within one to six weeks after rodent exposure. Although there is no specific treatment for Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, chances for recovery are better if medical attention is sought early.

“People need to be very careful when they are involved in activities which may put them in contact with rodents or their droppings,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the department’s state public health veterinarian. “It is important to remember that the best defense against Hantavirus is to avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, including nests and droppings, and to air out cabins and sheds before entering them.”

People can become infected and develop disease from HPS when they breathe in aerosolized virus particles that have been transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings or saliva. The deer mouse is the main reservoir for the strain of Hantavirus that occurs in New Mexico, Sin Nombre virus.

To protect yourself, avoid contact with mice and other rodents. Other important steps are:

- Air out closed up buildings before entering.
- Seal up homes and cabins so mice can’t enter.
- Trap mice until they are all gone.
- Clean up nests and droppings using a disinfectant.
- Put hay, wood, and compost piles as far as possible from your home.



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- Get rid of trash and junk piles.
- Don't leave your pet's food and water where mice can get to it.

The three previous cases this year are a 51-year-old woman from McKinley County reported in January and a 35-year-old man from Torrance County reported in May, both fatal; and a 39-year-old man from McKinley County in May who recovered. In 2010, there were two cases, both from McKinley County and both recovered. In 2009, New Mexico had four cases of Hantavirus, none fatal, from Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties. In 2008, New Mexico had two cases of Hantavirus, both fatal, from Taos and Otero counties.

For more information about Hantavirus, check out the Department's website:  
<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/HealthData/hantavirus.shtml>.

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