



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

GALE R BURSTEIN, MD, MPH
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

MEMORANDUM

TO: Police Officers, Police Dispatch, Animal Control Officers and 9-1-1 Operators

FROM: Gale R. Burstein, MD, MPH
Commissioner of Health

RE: Rabies Risk through Incidental Exposure to Bats

The Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) requests your assistance with every *potential* exposure to bats **regardless of whether there was a known bite**. As you may recall, ECDOH issues a plea every spring to immediately notify ECDOH whenever a bat is found in a residence.

“Keep the Bat and call the Health Department”

M-F 9am-5pm: (716) 961-6800

After-Hours (MERS): (716) 961-7898

Since a significant number of tested bats carry the rabies virus that can be transmitted to humans, I ask you to convey this simple message. A human rabies virus infection is nearly always fatal. Therefore, it is imperative that ECDOH be notified of every *potential* exposure since timely immunization effectively prevents rabies in humans. Equally important, post-exposure immunizations can be avoided if the bat tests negative for rabies. If the bat is available for testing, ECDOH will arrange the bat be tested at no cost to the resident.

It is critical that you, as the first contact with people who may be exposed to rabies, provide callers with the appropriate information regarding bats, their capture, and potential exposure. **ALWAYS encourage the bat be captured intact!** Avoid crushing the bat to enable testing of the brain. In the event law enforcement or another agency assists the public in capturing a bat, please contact ECDOH immediately to arrange for pickup of the captured or dead bat. The attached fact sheets should be utilized when providing information.

For additional information or questions, please contact Peter Tripi, ECDOH Rabies, Disease and Vector Control Program, at (716) 961-6800.

Thank you for your assistance with this vitally important public health matter.