

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 27, 2016

**South Central Public Health District Cautions Residents to Avoid Contact with Bats**

**Twin Falls, ID** – South Central Public Health District wants to remind the public to avoid contact with bats. Bats are a natural reservoir for rabies and without timely medical intervention; rabies is virtually 100% fatal in humans and animals.

Since June 9th, 2016, the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories has reported that five (5) bats from across the state have tested positive for rabies. Tanis Maxwell with South Central Public Health District reports that, “the number of phone calls we have received about dead bats has increased recently”, however Maxwell noted “that no bats in south central Idaho have tested positive for rabies and the statewide numbers do not indicate an increase in the number of infected bats”.

Rabies can only be confirmed in a laboratory, however any bat that is active by day or is found in a place where bats are not usually seen (for example, in a room in your home or on the lawn), or is unable to fly is far more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often the most easily approached. Therefore, it is best never to handle any bat.

If you are bitten by a bat – or if infectious material (such as saliva) from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound – wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water and get medical advice immediately.

Rabies can easily be passed to other animals. According to the Centers for Disease Control, cats, cattle, and dogs are the most frequently reported rabid domestic animals. Residents should ensure that pets are properly vaccinated.

If you have come into direct contact with a bat or find one in your house, and you are able to safely collect the bat, place the bat into a container. You will need to contact a South Central Public Health District Epidemiologist for further assistance. For more information, visit [http:// www.phd5.idaho.gov/rabies/](http://www.phd5.idaho.gov/rabies/)

**Contact:**

Tanis Maxwell  
[tmaxwell@phd5.idaho.gov](mailto:tmaxwell@phd5.idaho.gov)  
208-737-5971

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