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**PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

## **Health District urges residents to take precautions after rabid bat was discovered in downtown Twin Falls**

TWIN FALLS COUNTY- A bat, caught in downtown Twin Falls, tested positive today for rabies. The South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) urges residents to be extra careful and avoid all contact with bats because rabies can cause a fatal viral illness in both people and their pets.

This is the first bat this year to test positive for rabies in south central Idaho. One person, bitten by the bat, is currently undergoing preventative treatment.

“If you handled a bat in the downtown Twin Falls area in the last week, it is important that you contact your primary care provider immediately,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiology Program Manager. “Bat bites are extremely small and hard to see, so if there is any chance you were bitten it’s important to contact your health care provider right away and, if able, bring the dead bat to the Health District for testing.”

If you catch a bat and need it tested, please call (208) 737-5904 or (208) 737-5971 to speak with a Health District epidemiologist. SCPHD urges residents to only attempt bat captures if they can do it safely and avoid direct contact with the bat at all times.

While most bats are harmless and do not carry rabies, they are the only animal in Idaho to naturally carry the virus. Most animals, including household pets, can become exposed to the virus by playing with sick bats that can no longer fly.

“If you don’t catch rabies before symptoms begin it is almost always fatal,” Maxwell said, “It is crucial you keep yourself and your animals away from any infected bats.”

**To protect yourself from rabies:**

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands. Be very suspicious of any bat active during daylight hours.
- If a bat attacks you seek medical attention immediately, save the bat in a container without touching it, and contact your district health department to arrange for rabies testing.
- Always vaccinate your pets, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintain tight-fitting screens on windows. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter. Typically bat-proofing is best after most bats have migrated away in the fall.

For more information on bats and rabies please visit [www.phd5.idaho.gov](http://www.phd5.idaho.gov) or <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx> or <https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>