

Antigua gets mosquito-tracking GPS units

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Public Health Department within the Ministry of Health and the Environment is now in possession of ten (10) Global Positioning System (GPS) Units, which are to play a vital role in the eradication of the *Aedes Aegypti* Mosquito population on the island.

During a brief Handing-over ceremony at the Ministry's Headquarters on Redcliffe Street today (Tuesday), Pan American Health Organization's representative, Reynold Hewitt explained the rationale behind the gesture, noting that PAHO is sending a strong message that they are in the fight, to win it.

“The handing over of these GPS Units to the Ministry of Health is part of PAHO’s contribution to vector control which plays an important role in controlling the diseases spread by Mosquitoes, including the Zika Virus which is now in circulation. So the only real solution to the Zika, Chikungunya and Dengue issue is the elimination of the Aedes Aegypti Mosquito and so these GPS Units are tools to implement the spatial analysis program whereby vector control can be better targeted in those areas with high Mosquito densities”, Hewitt said.

When asked how the Units will be used in the fight against Mosquitoes, Hewitt said that software must be installed into each unit which is then uplink to a satellite and then the technicians will go into the fields and pinpoint where mosquito infestation and related diseases are located.



In accepting the donations, Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Health and Environment, Hildred Simpson said that her department is extreme pleased with the timely contribution and promised to have them fully utilized.

“This handing over of GPS equipment is extremely timely because at this point in time, we

need to be at our highest in terms of surveillance and vector control and we will ensure that the requisite training takes place so that we can get full benefit from these equipment”, Simpson noted.

Chief Health Inspector Lionel Michael said that the Solid Waste Department has already downloaded the software which is necessary for the units to work effectively.

“They are very important for us in Antigua and Barbuda, and it is important for us to use these machines in our day to day activities and we have already started to download the software and get the maps so we can provide map overlays which will help us to identify breeding places for the Aedes Aegypti Mosquito”, Michael disclosed.

He added that data collection will also play an important role in the control and complete eradication of Mosquitoes on a whole.

“It is important for us to fully identify the breeding grounds and to implement control measures so these machines will help us with the spatial analysis and other data such as where they breed, types of breeding containers, number of breeding containers and the best control measures to apply”, Michael concluded.

Comments

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