



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

GALE R. BURSTEIN, MD, MPH, FAAP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

MEMORANDUM

TO: Police Officers, Police Dispatch, 9-1-1 Operators, Fire and EMS First Responders, Animal and Dog Control Officers

FROM: Gale R. Burstein, MD, MPH, FAAP
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 part of our annual reminder, we ask that you immediately notify ECDOH whenever a bat is found in a residence.

Keep the Bat and call the Health Department

Monday—Friday 8:30 am—4:30 pm: (716) 961-6800 OR After-Hours (MERS): (716) 961-7898

In Erie County a significant number of bats tested for the rabies virus are positive. The rabies virus can be transmitted to humans. A **human rabies virus infection is fatal**.

Therefore, it is very important that ECDOH is notified of **every potential** exposure since timely immunization prevents rabies in humans after exposure. These post-exposure immunizations can be avoided if the bat tests negative for rabies. ECDOH arranges for bats to be tested for rabies at no cost to the resident.

As your agency may be the first contact with people potentially exposed to rabies, it is vital to provide callers with correct and accurate information regarding bats, their capture, and potential exposure.

- **ALWAYS encourage the bat be captured intact!**
 - Avoid crushing the bat to enable testing an intact brain
 - Once secure, **advise the public** to contact ECDOH next business day to arrange for them to **drop off** the bat at 503 Kensington, Buffalo
- **If law enforcement or another agency** assists the public in capturing a bat, please contact ECDOH immediately to arrange for pickup or drop-off of the captured or dead bat.
 - See attached fact sheets for additional information regarding safe capture and storage.

Raccoons, foxes and skunks are also presumed to have rabies in New York State. Any mammal can carry and transmit rabies. It is crucial for anyone in Erie County who touches a wild mammal or is bitten by any animal to call the ECDOH at 716-961-6800. For additional information or questions, please contact **Peter J. Tripi, ECDOH Rabies, Disease and Vector Control Program, at (716) 961-6800**.

Thank you for your assistance with this vitally important Public Health matter.