A 59-year-old woman from the Del Mar Boulevard area. A 34-year-old man from the Chacon neighborhood. City of Laredo health department officials released new information Thursday on 15 people treated in Laredo for Dengue fever in the past two weeks - a painful, Tropical disease carried by mosquitoes. Health department officials expect the numbers to continue to grow.

"I would say we're now past the stage when it's a Nuevo Laredo mosquito disease," health department director Jerry Robinson said. The list of people effected by includes a two-year-old boy and a 63-year old woman, a 34-year-old Zapata County man and a 17-year-old girl from the Heights.

All have tested positive for the disease in tests conducted in Laredo, but blood samples from the patients have been sent to the Texas Department of Health (TDH) for verification. As of Thursday afternoon, TDH had confirmed five of the cases, Robinson said. Dengue is carried by the Aedes aegyptai mosquito and the only way to catch the disease is to be bitten by an infected bug.

In its most severe form, it causes internal bleeding, weakness, fever, shock and intense pain, especially in the joints. There is no cure for the disease, but it typically disappears after a few weeks. Several of the victims got the disease after they were bitten by mosquitoes on this side of the Rio Grande, Robinson said, including a 23-year-old woman from the Heights who is six months pregnant, according to a health department memo.

The current outbreak of the disease in Laredo has its roots in a dengue epidemic that began earlier this summer in neighborhoods on the west side of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, Robinson said. Mexican officials have confirmed 106 cases of the disease, Robinson said, but some doctors say that number may by far higher.

Robinson doesn't expect the problem to reach that magnitude here. "We will never, however, reach the conditions they have across," Robinson said. That's because city officials began an anti-mosquito campaign more than two weeks ago, removing trash from yards and urging residents to discard artificial containers that hold water, providing breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Robinson said three doctors from the Texas Department of Health will come to Laredo next week to help track down victims of dengue, and treat them. "That will help us more accurately evaluate the scope of our problem," Robinson said. Officials in Rio Bravo, meanwhile, were alarmed to learn that one of the victims came from their small city south of Laredo, said city administrator Jorge Benavides.

"That really turned our switch on here," Benavides said. They plan to hold a meeting to educate residents about mosquitoes, and in particular, the fact that the tiny insects love to breed in old tires - a product which is in no short supply in Rio Bravo.
Dengue spread expected:Fifteen treated in Laredo for mosquito-carried fever