

Camper deaths, presence of plague darken summer at Yosemite

August 15 2015



In this 2005 file photo, visitors view Half Dome from Glacier Point at Yosemite National Park, Calif. Officials say an oak tree limb fell on a tent in the heart of Yosemite National Park killing two young campers early Friday morning, Aug. 14, 2015. Park spokesman Scott Gediman declined to release the ages or any details about the two, describing them only as under age 18. Gediman said the campground is one of the most popular with a view of Half Dome. (AP Photo/Dino Vournas, File)

The deaths of two young campers killed when a tree branch fell on their

tent and a campground closure because of plague has cast a pall over California's Yosemite National Park at the height of the summer tourist season.

The large limb from a black oak fell on the tent of the two young campers as they slept Friday, Yosemite spokesman Scott Gediman said. The campers, described only as under 18, were both dead when rangers arrived at the Upper Pines Campground, he said.

Large fallen limbs are a common occurrence at Yosemite, and they have occasionally led to deaths.

Meanwhile, park officials said Friday they will temporarily close another popular campsite after two squirrels died of [plague](#).

The Tuolumne Meadows Campground will close from noon Monday through noon Friday so authorities can treat the area with a flea-killing insecticide. Plague is carried by rodents and is spread by fleas, but transmission between people is rare.

"Although this is a rare disease, and the current risk to humans is low, eliminating the fleas is the best way to protect the public," said Dr. Karen Smith, director of the state Health Department.

A child fell ill with the plague after camping with his family at Yosemite's Crane Flat Campground in mid-July. The park reopened Crane Flat on Friday after treating that campground. The child has been recovering in a hospital.



In this frame made from a video provided by KFSN-TV-abc30 investigators view the area where a portion of an oak tree that split away, falling to the ground and killing two young campers in a tent at the Upper Pines campground in Yosemite National Park, Calif., Friday, Aug. 14, 2015. Park spokesman Scott Gediman declined to release the ages or any details about the two, describing them only as under age 18. (KFSN-TV-abc30 via AP)

Plague can be treated and cured by antibiotics given soon after infection, but it's deadly when treatment is delayed.

Since 1970, 42 people in California have contracted plague, resulting in nine deaths. Health officials find plague-infected animals every year, mostly in the mountains and foothills.



This frame made from a video provided by KFSN-TV-abc30 shows a portion of an oak tree that split away, falling to the ground and killing two young campers in a tent at the Upper Pines campground in Yosemite National Park, Calif., Friday, Aug. 14, 2015. Park spokesman Scott Gediman declined to release the ages or any details about the two, describing them only as under age 18. (KFSN-TV-abc30 via AP)



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