

This is the ESL News for the week of February 1st, 2016.

Health news: the Zika virus: The Zika virus was first discovered in Uganda, Africa, in 1947. Last year, it spread into Central and South America, the Caribbean, and parts of Mexico. Since then, its growth has been explosive.

It is spread by two types of mosquitoes. Most people who are infected have no symptoms at all. However, health experts say it is almost definitely related to birth defects, although this has not been conclusively proven, and how the virus might cause birth defects is not understood. It is thought to cause microcephaly, a condition with which babies are born with small heads and underdeveloped brains.

There is no known treatment for the zika virus at this time. Because it is a virus, not a bacteria, antibiotics don't work against it. There is talk of developing a vaccine, but this would take years.

Meanwhile, doctors are advising pregnant women and women who might become pregnant, to avoid travelling to the countries where it is present. Canadian airlines are refunding money for tickets of passengers who might be at risk.

Brazil is the country hardest hit at the moment. The government is spraying insecticides in an attempt to kill the mosquitoes. The 2016 Olympics will be held in Rio de Janeiro, and authorities are afraid this will hurt attendance.

The virus is expected to spread further north into the United States, but not into Canada, which is too cold for these mosquitoes.

China: Four Chinese miners have been rescued after 25 days underground. They were trapped underground when a tunnel of a gypsum mine collapsed. Rescue crews first drilled a narrow hole down, through which they could send water and food; then they dug a separate hole to free the men. When the mine collapsed, there were 29 men who were trapped. One died, fifteen have now been rescued, and thirteen are still missing.

Shortly after the government announced it would investigate if the mine company had not followed safety regulations, the company chairman committed suicide.

There is a movie coming out soon called "The 33". It is about the true story of 33 miners in Chile who were trapped underground in a mine for 69 days. You can see a preview if you go to Youtube and search: "*The 33 - official trailer*".

Weird news from Australia: A 19-year old man was arrested for plotting an act of terrorism against the police.

According to the police, the man was planning to pack explosives into the pouch of a kangaroo, then setting the kangaroo loose, targeting police officers at a Veterans' Day ceremony.

Seriously???

The man has been ordered to stand trial.

He has pleaded not guilty.

Some tragic news, some not so bad, about Canadians and winter:

Five snowmobilers were killed in an avalanche near McBride, about 210 kilometers southeast of Prince George. It was a huge snowslide, about 700 meters long and 700 meters wide. There were about 25 snowmobilers in the area at the time, but most were not hit by the avalanche, or managed to dig themselves out.

Avalanches occur when there is a thick unstable layer of snow. Often this lies on top of snow that has partly melted, and then has frozen; snow on top of this can start to slide. The most dangerous slope angle is between 35 and 40 degrees. Avalanches are rare on

mountain slopes below 25 degrees (not steep enough) or above 50 degrees (too steep for much snow to accumulate).

A 40-year old snowboarder has died on Cypress. He was snowboarding out of bounds with a friend, and they split up. When he didn't show up by 6:00 pm, the friend called 911, and North Shore Search and Rescue sent out a team to look for him. A helicopter found him the next day at the bottom of a cliff, but couldn't reach him right away, because of bad weather. When they did get to him, he was dead, but it's not clear from news reports if he died from a fall, or from hypothermia (losing too much body heat).

A 71-year old Anglican priest, Moses Kakekaspan, survived a night in the Arctic after the headlight in his snowmobile died and he eventually ran out of fuel in temperatures down to -43 degrees with the wind chill. But he had done some important things right: he was dressed in warm clothes, he had told people where he was going, the route he was taking, and what time to expect him by. He had left at 4 pm., and had told people to expect him by 10 pm. So when he didn't show up, the Canadian Rangers were contacted. This is a mostly aboriginal Canadian Forces reserve unit. They found him at 7 am. He had been walking for several hours, and was tired and a little disoriented, and a bit hypothermic. He didn't want to go to a medical clinic, though; he just wanted to go to his friend's place and warm up.

In Ontario, a rescue team went out in an inflatable boat to rescue two teenage boys going down a river on an ice floe, a large slab of floating ice. According to the news media, when the rescuers got close, the boys told them they were having fun, and to "F*** off." Well, the newspaper wouldn't print it, but it means "Fuck off", which most people consider vulgar, especially when it's said to someone who's come to help you. The rescuers finally convinced the boys to get in the boat with them, and everything turned out well in the end.