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*Company helps make pests buzz off*

By Sara Ganus

Business Writer

With a record high of West Nile virus cases in Oklahoma this year, it's no secret that this state has its share of mosquitoes.

While some public health authorities say next year could be no different, one company is hoping — with its help — it will be.

MosquitoNix, a national mosquito control company, plans to open an office in Oklahoma City or Tulsa by the start of summer to add to its 16 locations in Texas, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina.

"We're ready to grow into the Midwest in the first quarter of next year," said Josh Johnston, franchise development director for MosquitoNix.

Based in Dallas, MosquitoNix was formed in 2002 and has since installed about 2,000 automatic misting systems on residential and commercial properties as the latest form of mosquito control.

"What we're finding in places like Oklahoma, Indiana, Ohio and Chicago are also flies, ticks and deer flies are also a nuisance," Johnston said. "This system works on them also."

MosquitoNix's system is not a new one. Several local companies, like SWAT Mosquito Mist System and Mosquito Works in Norman have opened businesses that offer similar misting systems, but Mosquito Nix is the first national franchise offering those types of products to enter the market.

Like other mosquito control businesses, MosquitoNix uses a fully automated system that periodically distributes a fine mist of pyrethrum — a natural insecticide extracted from chrysanthemum flowers — around the perimeter of homes, yards or other properties.

Each system includes a 55-gallon drum filled with 1 gallon of pyrethrum and diluted with 54 gallons of water.

"We've done golf courses, restaurants, country clubs, driving ranges, daycare centers — you name it; we've done it," Johnston said.

Each residential system comes with a remote control, and most commercial systems are automatic, he said. Typically systems spray for a 30- to 45-second period in the morning between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., once at night, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. and finally between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m.

The average install in 2006 ran between \$2,800 and \$3,200, depending on the market.

Johnston said the chemical has been used as an insecticide for almost 70 years, primarily in the agricultural industry for horses and dairy cows.

Is the chemical safe?

Because most pesticides in residential misting systems last only short periods in the environment, long-term exposure to humans is not likely, but no pesticide should be considered 100 percent risk free, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Still, MosquitoNix stands behind its product and says it is safe if used properly.

"This is the last exclamation mark on your backyard," Johnston said. "You spend all your money on your hot tub, pool, patio, outdoor kitchen, whatever it may be. This allows you to actually enjoy it."

Cindy Hellstern, a Dallas resident, said she and her husband were worried about the possible health risks associated with MosquitoNix's misting system until they weren't comfortable in their own back yard.

When Hellstern learned about a friend who contracted Lyme disease and another friend who got West Nile from a mosquito bite, she and her husband decided it was time to install the misting system.

"After we put the MosquitoNix in, it was like the next day — it was instantaneous — we were comfortable," she said. "We just spray it at dawn and at dusk and then once late in the evening, and that's all it takes."

For more information on MosquitoNix, go to [www.mosquitonix.com](http://www.mosquitonix.com)