

Health advisory issued for portion of beach due to oil spill

PENSACOLA -- Effective immediately, in response to a report by the Escambia County Emergency Operations Center of extensive oil sheen, oil mousse and tar balls, the Escambia County (FL) Health Department is issuing a health advisory for the following beach waters in Escambia County, Florida, that have been affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill:

From the Pensacola Beach Fishing Pier west to the Pensacola Pass. This includes Ft. Pickens.

Consider the following tips for avoiding negative health impacts from an oiled shoreline:

- Avoid entering areas where oil can be seen (no wading, swimming or entering the water).
- Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil-contaminated water and sediments.
- Avoid contact with dead or dying fish or other aquatic life.
- Do not swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill, and if traveling through the area by boat take precautions when hoisting the boat anchor. If oil makes contact with the skin, wash it off with grease-cutting liquid dishwashing detergent and water.
- Do not fish in oil spill-affected waters.
- Do not harvest or eat dead fish, fish with oily residue, or fish that have a petroleum odor.
- Avoid boating through oil slicks or sheens.
- Young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and individuals with underlying respiratory conditions should avoid the area.
- Prevent pets from entering oil-contaminated areas.
- Those near Florida's Gulf Coast may detect an odor because of the oil spill. Some people are more sensitive to these odors and may experience nasal irritation and feelings of nausea. In combination with seasonal allergies, such as sensitivity to pollen, or pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, some people may experience more severe symptoms.
- Individuals experiencing respiratory symptoms that are aggravated by the odors from the oil spill should consider:
 - o Staying indoors in air-conditioning and avoiding strenuous outdoor activity.
 - o If symptoms do not improve, contact a primary care physician or other health care professional for medical advice.
 - o Individuals who have pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma or other respiratory illnesses should contact their physician if feeling symptomatic.

The health department is posting signs at the affected area; a copy of the sign is attached. Residents can participate in activities that are above the high tide line. If they experience respiratory problems, they should leave the area and contact a physician, as they deem necessary.

The health department will continue to work with the Emergency Operations Center, and will notify the public, through the media and its website (www.EscambiaHealth.com), when the health advisory is no longer in effect.

For more information contact:

- o Escambia County Health Department at (850)595-6700
- o Escambia County Citizen's Information Line at 471-6600 from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CDT (Monday – Sunday) or www.escambiadisasterresponse.com
- o Florida Oil Spill Information Line at (888)337-3569