



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama agencies take steps to protect public's health during Gulf oil spill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are taking steps to protect the public's health as a result of new developments concerning the Gulf oil spill.

Oil has been identified on a portion of Dauphin Island beaches and in waters immediately offshore. In response, the Alabama Department of Public Health is issuing a swimming advisory for Dauphin Island beaches. Because of the presence of visible oil in Gulf waters adjacent to Dauphin Island, individuals are discouraged from swimming in these waters. The Alabama Department of Public Health will be posting signs advising residents not to swim.

The state health officer will be closing all Alabama oyster beds at 3 p.m. CDT today. This closure is precautionary due to presence of oil in Alabama waters. In addition, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will be closing all Gulf waters, including Pelican Bay, west of longitude 88 degrees 4.5 minutes to all commercial and recreational fishing. This closes Alabama Gulf waters to fishing from the east end of Dauphin Island to the Mississippi state line.

In an effort to ensure the health and safety of the public, ADEM has been collecting water and sediment samples for more than a week. Hydrocarbons have been detected in Alabama waters which extend from the shoreline to points three miles offshore. At this point the detected chemicals do not pose a health threat and the concentrations are lower than levels permissible in drinking water.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "These are precautionary measures to protect the public's health. We will continue to monitor the situation and reassess the need for further advisories if the situation changes."

Residents should take the following additional precautions.

Protective Measures

- Avoid direct skin contact with the oil.
- If you get oil or tar balls on your skin, wash with soap and water.
- Launder clothing as usual if you get oil on it.
- There is no need to use harsh detergents, solvents or other chemicals to wash oil from skin or clothing, and it is discouraged.

Food Advisories

- If a fish smells or tastes like oil, do not eat it.
- Wash hands before eating.

Odor

Some people also may be sensitive to any change in air quality, which could cause symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or headaches. If you have these symptoms, authorities recommend you consider staying indoors, ventilating your home with air conditioning, and avoiding strenuous outdoor activity. If these symptoms do not improve, you should then consider contacting your primary care physician or other health care provider for medical advice. If you have pre-existing medical conditions, such as asthma or other respiratory illness, you should consider communicating with your physician if you feel symptomatic.

Updated information will be available at www.adph.org .