



NEWS RELEASE



FOR RELEASE: September 4, 2015
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Potential for Blue-Green Algae in Ohio River ***State Urges Precautions over Holiday Weekend***

The State of Ohio has been working with the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO), Kentucky and West Virginia to respond to reports of Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) on the Ohio River.

River and weather conditions are favorable for HAB formation, particularly near shore and in protected areas. This is not a continuous bloom, nor is it a bloom moving down the River like a spill.

Under the right conditions, HABs can bloom in water – usually in lakes, ponds and slow-moving rivers – when there is sunlight, warm temperatures and nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) in the water.

Ohioans are advised to be alert over Labor Day weekend if they plan to recreate on the Ohio River. Avoid contacting water that:

- Looks like spilled paint
- Has surface scums, mats or films
- Is discolored or has colored streaks
- Has green globs floating below the surface

If you or your pet comes into contact with blue-green algae, rinse off with clean, fresh water as soon as possible.

If you plan to eat the fish you catch, remove the guts and liver, and rinse fillets in tap water before eating. Other activities near the water such as camping, picnicking, biking and hiking are safe. If you are picnicking, wash your hands before eating if you have had contact with river water or shore debris.

Ohio EPA has been working directly with public water systems using the Ohio River to ensure they are aware of conditions and have optimized treatment. No cyanotoxins have been detected in treated drinking water being provided to the public.

HABs can produce toxic chemicals which may make people and pets sick depending upon the amount and type of exposure. This is especially true for the very young, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems. Types of exposure include swallowing HABs-contaminated water, skin contact and inhaling aerosolized water droplets. HABs toxins can cause a rash, hives, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and more severe symptoms at higher levels of exposure.

Seek immediate medical attention if you become sick after recreating on the river and think you may have had contact with HABs. Contact your veterinarian if your pet gets sick.

ORSANCO will continue to coordinate a monitoring plan with Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio.

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The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency was created in 1972 to consolidate efforts to protect and improve air quality, water quality and waste management in Ohio. Since then, air pollutants dropped by as much as 90 percent; large rivers meeting standards improved from 21 percent to 89 percent; and hundreds of polluting, open dumps were replaced with engineered landfills and an increased emphasis on waste reduction and recycling.