



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Red tide cells found at Gulf Shores

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Water samples collected on Oct. 4 at Gulf Shores indicate the presence of red tide cells, the Alabama Department of Public Health announces.

Red tide results from a massive build-up of certain species of microscopic sea organisms known as dinoflagellates. These organisms produce a toxin that affects the central nervous system of fish so they are paralyzed and cannot breathe. At high concentrations, the organisms may produce a discoloration of the water. Red tides are often referred to as "blooms." The species (*Karenia brevis*), isolated from Gulf Shores waters, may produce toxins that also cause skin irritation and respiratory problems in humans.

Health Department officials advise:

- Avoid the area if you are susceptible to respiratory problems such as asthma or emphysema.
- Leave the water if you experience skin irritations while swimming or boating and rinse immediately with fresh water.
- If you experience nose, throat or eye irritation when exposed to the gulf mist, avoid the mist.

The Alabama Department of Public Health will continue to monitor gulf and bay waters for the presence of red tide cells. At this time the oyster reefs are unaffected.

Unfortunately, the presence of red tide cannot be predicted to be at a certain location at a certain time. The effects depend on many variables such as temperature, salinity, direction of the wind, and how concentrated the organisms are at a given location.

For additional information concerning the advisory, contact Dr. Lewis A. Byrd, Alabama Department of Public Health, in Mobile at (251) 432-7618.

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