



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Public advised to use caution in waters with high concentrations of red tide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

John Guarisco, Ph.D.
(334) 206-5971
Ron Dawsey
(334) 206-5375

The Alabama Department of Public Health cautions the public that water samples collected from Florida Point to Fort Morgan in Baldwin County, Mobile Bay, Weeks Bay, Bayou La Batre and Mississippi Sound indicate the presence of red tide cells. Persons with respiratory problems or those experiencing symptoms of nose, throat or eye irritation should avoid any mist generated by these waters. In addition, fish kills are possible in this area because of red tide.

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 waters along the Gulf Coast, 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.
- Do not eat fish from the red tide-affected area that are lethargic, swim in circles or appear unhealthy.

The Alabama Department of Public Health will continue to monitor gulf and bay waters for the presence of red tide cells. 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.