

Red Tide Hits Pensacola



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County Perspective

- Environmental Health
- Media
- Epidemiology

Environmental Health

- Followed HAB bulletins
- Water tester had sensitivities (scratchy throat, dry cough and watery eyes)
- Notification to immediate supervisor

Press Release

- -Health officials recommend that people experiencing these symptoms stay away from beach areas—once a person leaves the red tide area, the symptoms usually go away (released 10-3-2005)
- FAQ's

FAQ's

- What is red tide?
- What causes red tide?
- How do you know that red tide is in the water?
- Is there any way to control red tide?
- How does red tide kill fish?
- Why can't I eat shellfish during a red tide?
- When will this red tide go away?
- What causes the respiratory irritation near the beaches during red tides?

Epidemiology

- Started to receive calls after media release and instructions that all medical questions be directed to epidemiology
- Created a health questionnaire and began to follow-up on all reports

Individual Cases

- 36 yr. old white male surfing had difficulty breathing, runny nose, cough and eye irritation lasting a total of 3 hours (1 ½ hours after leaving the beach) on 9/25 and 10/02
- Patient had a history of asthma and bronchitis

Occupational Health Risk?

- 20 yr. old white male lifeguard had cough for 8 hours
- 21 yr. old white female lifeguard had a cough and eye irritation for 10 ½ hours (8 hours lifeguard and 2 ½ hours surfing)
- 47 yr. old white male construction worker, works several hundred yards off beach, coughing and eye irritation (part of a group of 15 construction workers with similar symptoms from Destin to AL)
- Navy Seals with symptoms after training session in bay

Lessons Learned

- Issue prevention PSA in anticipation of red tide event, then issue health alert when confirmation of red tide is in area
- Internal communication is key
- May need separate message for occupational settings