

**Florida Department of Health
Deepwater Horizon
Issuance Oil Impact Notices
Due to Oil-Spill Related Impacts to Water**

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Purpose: This concept of operations establishes criteria that will be used by County Health Departments to issue oil impact notices due to the Deepwater Horizon incident. The department has adopted the beach water sampling health advisories outlined in F.S. 514.023 as a model for issuance of oil impact notices for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Planning Assumptions

- Coastal water quality is an important issue from public health, environmental, and economic standpoints.
- Coastal water pollution has economic impacts: every day a beach is affected by the oil increases the adverse economic consequences to local communities and tourism.
- Florida beach safety is a shared responsibility across local, state and federal authorities. Multiple entities have authority to regulate Florida beaches or beach water access.
- The Deepwater Horizon Oil spill has impacted Florida beaches.
- Beaches may be impacted at varying levels by the oil spill over time.
- Changes in surf conditions may make oil or oil products difficult to see.
- It may be necessary to issue notices in order to protect the health and safety of Florida residents and visitors.
- The Florida Constitution allows local jurisdictions to restrict beach access or use by exercising its police power if in the interest of the public's health and safety.
- BP has the lead for response and clean-up activities.
- Florida has access to information on the composition of the oil released from the Deepwater Horizon incident.
- County Health Department Directors / Administrators have the authority to issue oil impact notices if the quality of beaches and beach waters fails to meet standards established by the department. For purposes of the Deepwater Horizon incident, the triggers below establish departmental standards.

Authorities

- State Emergency Response Team has authority under F.S. 252 to coordinate state response to disasters.



Concept of Operations

The Florida Department of Health is able to issue oil impact notices urging residents and visitors not to enter waters or public bathing areas that pose health threats. The issuance of oil impact notices associated with this incident should be coordinated with local emergency management and local officials and reported to both the State Watch Office at 1-800-320-0519 and the DOH Division of Environmental Health via email to oilybeaches@doh.state.fl.us.

1. **Trigger for issuing and posting an oil impact notice for Florida beaches or other public bathing areas.**

The visible presence of an extensive oil sheen, oil slick, oil mousse, or extremely large numbers of tar balls in the water, within 100 yards of the shore, as observed by a designated government professional. This observation need only occur once in order to post the beach as an impacted beach. The physical extent of the impacted beach or public bathing area must be determined and reported.

2. **Oil Impact Notice to be posted at beach or at public bathing areas:**

It is recommended the oil impact notice signs will be posted at the beach 'access points' from land side and from the water side, based on the local knowledge of where people are swimming and mooring or launching boats.

Oil Impact Notice

This beach has been affected by Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Oil product may be present on the beach and in the water, yet may not be visible due to changing surf conditions.

If oil product is present (extensive oil sheen, oil slick, oil mousse, or extremely large numbers of tar balls in the water) and to avoid potential health impacts, please:

- Avoid wading, swimming or entering the water.
- Avoid contact with oil and oily materials in the water or on the beach.
- Avoid contact with dead or dying fish or other aquatic life.
- Young children, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems should avoid the area.
- If experiencing respiratory problems, leave the area and contact your physician, as you deem necessary.

If oil makes contact with skin, wash it off with grease-cutting liquid dishwashing detergent and water.

For more information contact the County Health Department at xxx-xxxx or County Emergency Management at xxx-xxxx, or the Florida Oil Spill Information Line xxx-xxx-xxxx

3. **Trigger for removing an oil impact notice for Florida beaches or public bathing areas.**

The oil impact notice may be removed based on local determination that the beach is no longer impacted by the oil spill. Existing notice signage may be replaced by other informational notices based on the condition of the beach.

4. **The following conditions warrant further investigation to determine if they are linked to an oil spill or other environmental condition.**

- Numerous dead fish or other aquatic life in the water or on the shore.
- Odor complaints in a limited geographic area.

- Reports of sheen or slick on coastal waters, unlikely to be related to this oil spill.
- Poison Control Center calls in a limited geographic area with similar symptoms.

Note: If the investigation of these events reveals that the condition of the beach and adjacent waters related to the oil spill incident requires further decision making, an appropriate course of action will be made at that time.