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Public health advisory issued for Siltcoos Lake

A health advisory prompted by high algae levels found in Siltcoos Lake, located adjacent to the National Dunes Recreation Area, just 6 miles south of Florence, and 15 miles north of Reedsport, was issued today by Dunes City, South Coast Water District, the Lane County Health Department, and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS).

Water sampling by the Aquatic Analyst has confirmed the presence of blue-green algae that can produce toxins harmful to humans and animals, said Ken Kauffman, Environmental Health Specialist with the Oregon DHS Environmental Toxicology Program.

These levels are likely to be associated with dangerous toxin concentrations in the water, according to World Health Organization guidelines.

Drinking tap water, cooking, showering, and dishwashing and all other household uses of water with the exception of toilet flushing should be avoided, as well as other skin contact with water by humans or animals. Drinking water directly from Siltcoos Lake is especially dangerous. The toxins cannot be removed by boiling, filtering, or treating water.

DHS recommends that if people choose to eat fish from Siltcoos Lake, they should remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in these tissues.

Symptoms of numbness, tingling and dizziness can lead to difficulty breathing or heart problems and require immediate medical attention. Symptoms of skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also receive medical attention if they persist or worsen. Children and pets are particularly susceptible.

The public will be advised when the concern no longer exists.

For local information contact the South Coast Water District at (541) 997-8011 or Dunes City at (541) 997-3338.

For health information, contact Ken Kauffman, DHS Environmental Health Specialist, at (971) 673-0435 or <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/envtox/maadvisories.shtml>