



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO USE CUSTOM SURFBOARD TO
MEASURE BACTERIA AT SELECTED O‘AHU SURF SITES**

HONOLULU – To help protect Hawai‘i’s surfers and ocean swimmers, the Department of Health (DOH) Clean Water Branch (CWB) will honor National Clean Beaches Week, June 29-July 5, with a new tool and a unique water study that will provide new information about surf site water quality. An 11-foot custom surfboard, outfitted with sampling bottle and water quality monitoring equipment holders, will be used to monitor bacteria levels at selected surf sites on O‘ahu. The first surf sites to be monitored will be at Waikiki, in time for the summer south swell season. The branch also conducts regular shoreline water sampling.

“While we have done some surf site sampling before by boat, this new surfboard will let us get samples in the surf zone,” said Watson Okubo, Monitoring & Analysis Section Chief, DOH Clean Water Branch. “Hawai‘i’s ocean water quality is usually good, and this new tool will help us learn more about the quality of water people play in.” Okubo noted that ongoing testing and water quality monitoring is essential as the ocean can become polluted by runoff from streams, storm drains, and waste water spills.

To assess bacteria levels at surf sites fronting the Waikiki Beach, CWB staff surfer Josh Marvit will use the surfboard to collect water samples at two surf sites, three times a week, as part of an ongoing special study being done in cooperation with the University of Hawai‘i Medical School and the Surfrider Foundation O‘ahu Chapter.

(more)

“The Department of Health lab will analyze the water samples to determine bacteria levels in the waters of the surf zones. If the levels are high, those using those waters have a greater risk of contracting gastrointestinal sicknesses such as diarrhea,” says Okubo.

To notify the public about unsafe water quality, the DOH issues news releases and posts warning messages on the CWB website at

<http://emdweb.doh.hawaii.gov/CleanWaterBranch/CurrentWarnings/default.aspx>.

The public can also check on the status of water at Hawai'i's beaches any time by phoning the DOH Clean Water Branch Hotline and get a recorded message at 808-586-5826. This 24-hour telephone number provides a daily report on contamination warnings and advisories. The public can also check on safety-hazard issues of beaches in Hawai'i by going to;

www.hawaiibeachsafety.org.

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