



news release

From The Texas Department of Health
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Health Officials Advise Against Consuming Fish from Town Lake

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) today advised that any species of fish caught in Austin's Town Lake may be unsafe for consumption because of contamination with the banned pesticide, chlordane.

The TDH advisory reinforces a similar alert issued by local health officials three years ago. Although the earlier alert warned of contamination in some fish species, testing of fish from the lake since 1987 shows that unsafe concentrations of chlordane persist in nearly all species tested.

Chlordane, once commonly used for termite control, was banned in 1987 when the chemical was found to be a possible cancer-causing agent.

Richard Thompson, director of the TDH Shellfish Sanitation Control Division, said, "Although both the Austin and Travis County health authorities warned against eating fish caught in Town Lake, some people may still be tempted to eat what they catch."

Thompson said that chlordane is similar to DDT, another banned pesticide believed to cause cancer. "Like DDT, chlordane is not easily soluble in water. Therefore, we can expect to detect chlordane in the lake's sediments for years to come. We will continue testing and, of course, re-issue our warnings against eating the fish as long as it is necessary."

He added that the Austin Health and Human Services Department and Travis County Health Department, as well as other state agencies and groups, have cooperated to gather samples for testing.

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(For more information, contact Richard Thompson, Director, Division of Shellfish Sanitation Control, at 512/458/7510, or Margaret Wilson, Public Information Coordinator, Public Health Promotion Division, at 512/458-7405.)

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