

## What is a harmful algal bloom (HAB)?

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are not composed of algae at all, but a type of bacteria. When conditions are favorable (such as calm weather conditions, and an increase in water temperature and nutrients) these bacteria can reproduce rapidly, forming a bloom. HABs can occur at any time, but often occur in late summer or early fall.

## What does a HAB look like?

HABs can be blue, bright green, brown, or red and may look like paint or anti-freeze floating on the water. As the bloom matures, it may look like foam, scum, or mats on the surface and shoreline of freshwater lakes and ponds.



To report a HAB call your local Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) office. For concerns about health effects from HABs please call your local Public Health District (numbers on back). (backbrochure).

## How are people and animals exposed to HABs?

People and animals can be exposed to HABs by swallowing water or touching the water during recreational activities, such as wading, swimming, diving, and water skiing.

## What are the health effects of HABs?

*In people*, the most common health effect is skin and eye irritation. Other more severe health effects can be:

- Allergic reactions
- Muscle cramps or tremor
- Difficulty breathing
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Headache or drowsiness
- Numbness and tingling in lips, fingers, and toes
- Speech not understandable
- Seizures
- Liver and kidney damage

***If you have contact with a HAB and you or a companion have symptoms, consult a medical provider immediately!***

*Pets and livestock* exposed to a HAB may show signs such as:

- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Weakness or muscle tremors
- Staggering or confusion
- Difficulty breathing
- Convulsions or coma
- Death

Animals exposed to a HAB may die within tens of minutes to hours.

***If your pet comes into contact with a HAB, call a veterinarian right away.***

Decomposing HABs can also kill fish.

## How can I prevent exposure to HABs?

- Do not go in or near any water that has an unusual color. Keep children, pets, and livestock out of the water.
- Avoid any water sports such as swimming, diving, water skiing, boating, or paddle boarding in areas with HABs.
- Do not use untreated water for drinking, bathing, cleaning, or cooking. Boiling water from a HAB will **NOT** remove toxins — boiling may cause more toxin to be released.

## Is it safe to fish in waters with a HAB present?

It is best to avoid direct contact with waters affected by a HAB. If you choose to fish in affected waters, clean any gear used (e.g. waders) and wash your hands thoroughly with clean water.

## Is it safe to eat fish from waters affected by a HAB?

There have been no reports of people becoming sick from eating fish caught during a bloom. Information about the health risks of eating fish from affected waters is limited. However, fish fillets are less likely to accumulate toxins compared to other parts of the fish. If you decide to eat fish from affected waters:

- Remove the skin, organs, and fatty deposits from the fish
- Avoid cutting into organs
- Rinse the fillets with clean water before cooking
- Remember to follow Idaho Fish Consumption Advisory recommendations when choosing to eat fish

## DEQ Regional Offices

### DEQ Boise Regional Office

1445 N. Orchard St.  
Boise, ID 83706  
ph: (208) 373-0550  
toll-free: (888) 800-3480

### DEQ Coeur d'Alene Regional Office

2110 Ironwood Parkway  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
ph: (208) 769-1422  
toll-free: (877) 370-0017

### DEQ Idaho Falls Regional Office

900 N. Skyline Drive, Suite B  
Idaho Falls, ID 83402  
ph: (208) 528-2650  
toll-free: (800) 232-4635

### DEQ Lewiston Regional Office

1118 "F" St.  
Lewiston, ID 83501  
ph: (208) 799-4370  
toll-free: (877) 541-3304

### DEQ Pocatello Regional Office

444 Hospital Way, #300  
Pocatello, ID 83201  
ph: (208) 236-6160  
toll-free: (888) 655-6160

### DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office

650 Addison Ave. West, Suite 110  
Twin Falls, ID 83301  
ph: (208) 736-2190  
toll-free: (800) 270-1663

## Poison Center

**1-800-222-1222**

## Public Health Districts

### Panhandle Health District

208-415-5100  
[www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov)  
(serving Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties)

### Public Health - Idaho North Central District

208-799-3100  
[www.idahopublichealth.com](http://www.idahopublichealth.com)  
(serving Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez Perce counties)

### Southwest District Health

208-455-5400  
[www.swdh.org](http://www.swdh.org)  
(serving Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, and Washington counties)

### Central District Health Department

208-375-5211  
[www.cdhd.idaho.gov](http://www.cdhd.idaho.gov)  
(serving Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley counties)

### South Central Public Health District

208-737-5900; (866) 710-9775  
[www.phd5.idaho.gov](http://www.phd5.idaho.gov)  
(serving Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties)

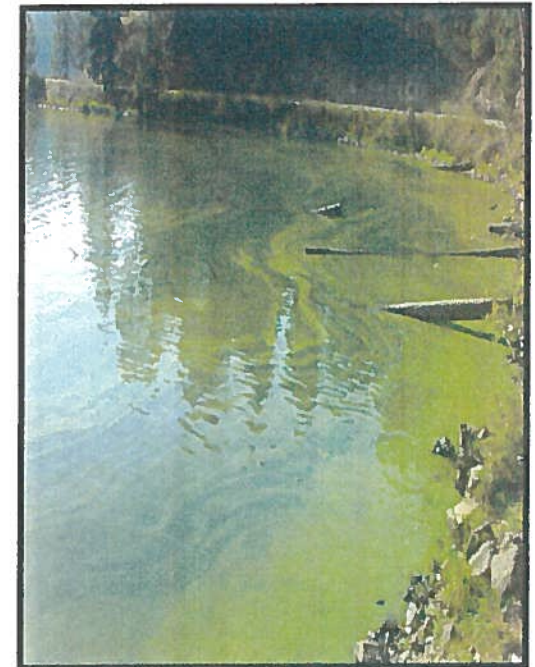
### Southeastern Idaho Public Health

208-233-9080  
[www.siphidaho.org](http://www.siphidaho.org)  
(serving Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Butte, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, and Power counties)

### Eastern Idaho Public Health District

208-522-0310  
<https://phd7.idaho.gov>  
(serving Bonneville, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton counties)

# Harmful Algal Blooms



*Photo provided by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality*

October 2017



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH & WELFARE