DEEPWATER HORIZON RESPONSE

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DEEPWATER HORIZON HEALTH INFORMATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Introduction
Since the Deepwater Horizon crude oil spill began in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, Unified Command as well as the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) have been monitoring and responding to potential health and environmental concerns. Environmental data, including air quality and water and sediment samples, are being collected on an ongoing basis by response teams along the coastline outlined in Governor Crist's Executive Orders. This data is used to determine if there are potential risks to public health and the environment.

Will I be able to go to the beach if oil sheen washes up along the shore?
Beaches will only be closed if they become unsafe to walk on. If this occurs, closures may be issued by the appropriate local authority. Beach use above the high water mark is usually not impacted by oil or oil products. Florida waters and beaches are monitored daily for oil spill impacts.

For most people, an occasional brief contact with a small amount of oil, while not recommended, will do no harm. However, some people are sensitive to chemicals, including hydrocarbons found in crude oil and petroleum products. They may experience skin and eye irritation even from brief contact with oil. In general, contact with oil should be avoided. If contact occurs, wash the area with grease cutting dishwashing detergent and water. DOH discourages the use of gasoline, kerosene or other solvents to clean oil from skin.

Consider the following tips for avoiding negative health impacts from an oiled shoreline:

- Do not touch or collect tar balls. Beach cleaning should only be done by trained professionals.
- Avoid entering areas where oil can be seen or smelled.
- Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil-contaminated water and sediments.
- Do not swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill, and if traveling through the area by boat, take precautions when hoisting the boat anchor. If oil makes contact with skin, wash it off with a grease-cutting liquid dishwashing detergent and water.
- Do not fish in oil spill-affected waters.

- Do not harvest or eat dead fish, fish with oily residue or fish that have a petroleum odor.
- Avoid boating through oil slicks or sheens.
- Young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and individuals with underlying respiratory conditions should avoid the area.
- Prevent pets from entering oil-contaminated areas.

For additional information about Florida's beaches, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon.

What is the difference between a Health Advisory and an Oil Impact Notice?
Health Advisories are generally short term messages used to convey that certain conditions are likely to occur over a specific geographic area. Once the risk is passed the advisory is rescinded by the issuing authority.

Notices are generally longer term messages used to convey the possibility that certain conditions may occur or reoccur over a greater geographic area. Notices are left in place to inform the public what the conditions are and advise what they should do when the conditions are present. Notices are rescinded once the probability the condition will occur has passed.

County health departments, in coordination with emergency management and local officials, may issue Health Advisories once the visible presence of oil or oil products is observed in the water within 100 yards of the beach by a designated government professional. Oil in the water or on the beach poses little risk to the health of the general public (not participating in clean up) if they remain out of the water. Advisories are rescinded once there are consecutive high tides with no oil or oil products observed in the water from the high water mark out to 100 yards from shore.

Likewise, County health departments, in coordination with emergency management and local officials, may issue Oil Impact Notices once the visible presence of oil or oil products is observed in the water within 100 yards of the beach by a designated government professional. The observation need only occur once in order to post the beach as an impacted beach. Oil Impact Notice signs will be posted at beach access points based on the local knowledge of where people are swimming and mooring or launching boats. The Oil Impact Notice could potentially stay in place for an extended period of time and 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.

Are Florida waters safe for scuba diving, snorkeling and swimming?
It is recommended that before you begin your dive or swim, you should visually inspect the area for signs indicating the presence of oil (oil sheen, slicks, tar balls, oil mousse, mats, etc). If you see any visible signs of oil, it is recommended that you do not scuba

dive, snorkel or swim in the area. Water quality sampling information can be found at www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/water.htm.

If you are exposed to oil while swimming or diving, it is recommended that you wash all exposed skin areas with grease-cutting liquid dishwashing detergent and water as soon as possible. More prolonged exposure could cause more serious skin irritation or a rash. Because scuba divers use compressed air, it is unlikely they are in any danger from inhaling water contaminated with oil, even if they accidentally surface in an exposed area.

Is the air safe to breathe?
At the present time, there are no detectable effects on Florida's air quality due to the spill. State and federal agencies are working together to answer questions about how the oil spill and burning oil may affect air quality. Currently, air samples are being gathered by state and federal agencies 24 hours per day. These samples are tested for vapors that may evaporate from the water/oil mixture in the Gulf as well as for particulate matter or fine particles that may result from the smoke generated by in-situ burning. The levels of particulate matter and volatile organic compound chemicals are being tracked closely. Daily air quality reports and air monitoring data can be found at http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/air.htm. For additional information, visit http://gulfcoast.airnowtech.org/.

Is my water safe to drink?
Most drinking water comes from surface water and wells inland. The oil spill is not likely to affect drinking water. If you have any concerns about your water, contact your water utility. Federal and state agencies are collecting water samples along affected coastlines to determine potential risks to public health and the environment. The company that supplies your water is responsible for routinely monitoring the water it supplies. You will be notified if your water doesn't meet federal and state standards. The notice will describe any precautions you need to take, such as boiling your water. Follow the advice of your water supplier or local health department if you ever receive such a notice. The oil spill is not expected to impact domestic wells.

Is Gulf Seafood safe to eat?
Federal and state agencies continue to closely monitor the safety of seafood harvested from the Gulf area. The public should not be concerned about the safety of seafood in stores at this time. There is no reason to believe that any contaminated product has made its way to the market. Fish and shellfish harvested from areas unaffected by the closures are considered safe to eat. More information on Florida's seafood can be found at http://www.fl-seafood.com/.

How can I cope with the worry and unknown outcomes of the oil spill?
The American Psychological Association (APA) developed a public education campaign – Road to Resilience - to help people manage challenging life events. Resilience is the ability to "bounce back" from adversity and adapt to changing circumstances. It involves skills that people can learn and apply in their daily lives.

These recommendations may help you to better handle the current Gulf disaster:

- **Make connections.** Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

- **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

- **Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

- **Move toward your goals.** Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

- **Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

- **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

- **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

- **Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

- **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

- **Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

For more information, please visit http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/ **or contact your local county health department at** http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdsitelist.htm.