

**Florida Department of Health**  
**Deepwater Horizon**  
**Issuance of Health Advisories**  
**Due to Oil-Spill Related Impacts to Water**  
Version 2.0, May 10, 2010

**Purpose:** This concept of operations establishes criteria for the County Health Departments to issue health advisories due to the Deepwater Horizon incident. The department has adopted the beachwater sampling health advisories outlined in F.S. 514.023 as a model for issuance of health advisories for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

**Planning Assumptions**

- Coastal water quality is an important issue from public health, environmental, and economic standpoints.
- Coastal water pollution has economic impacts: every day a beach is closed increases the adverse economic consequences to local communities and tourism.
- Florida beach safety is a shared responsibility across local, state and federal authorities. Multiple entities have authority to regulate Florida beaches or beach water access.
- The Deepwater Horizon Oil spill is anticipated to impact Florida beaches.
- Beaches may be impacted at varying levels by the oil spill over time.
- It may be necessary issue advisories in order to protect health and safety of Florida citizens.
- The Florida Constitution allows local jurisdictions to close beach access or restrict use by exercising its police power if in the interest of public's health and safety.
- British Petroleum (BP) Company has the lead for response and clean-up activities.
- Florida has access to information on the composition of the oil released from the Deepwater Horizon incident.
- County Health Department Directors have the authority to issue beach water health advisories if the quality of beach waters fails to meet standards established by the department. For purposes of the Deepwater Horizon incident, the triggers below establish departmental standards.

**Authorities**

- State Emergency Response Team has authority under F.S. 252 to coordinate state response to disasters.



## Concept of Operations

The Florida Department of Health is able to issue health advisories urging citizens not to enter waters that pose health threats. The issuance of health advisories associated with this incident should be coordinated with local emergency management and reported to the Division of Environmental Health..

### 1. Trigger for issuing a health advisory for Florida beaches

The visible presence of an extensive oil sheen or oil slick in the water, or on the shore, observed by a designated government professional. The physical extent of the impacted beach must be determined and reported.

### 2. Advisory to be posted at beach:

Health Advisory

This beach is affected by Deepwater Horizon oil spill

Due to potential health risks you are advised to:

- Avoid contact with the water (no wading, swimming or entering the water).
- Avoid contact with oil and oily materials in the water or on the beach.
- Avoid contact with dead or dying fish or other aquatic life.
- If experiencing respiratory problems, leave the area and contact your physician, as you deem necessary.
- For more information contact the County Health Department at xxx-xxxx or County Emergency Management at xxx-xxxx, or the EPA Information Line xxx-xxx-xxxx

### 3. Trigger for rescinding a health advisory for Florida beaches

Four consecutive high tides with no oil sheen/oil slick observed in the water from the high water mark out to 100 yards from shore as observed by a designated government professional.

### 4. Trigger for issuing a general health advisory

Air quality measurement results showing elevated particulate matter (PM) or volatile organic compounds (VOC) that are suspected to be from the oil spill incident.

### 5. The following conditions warrant further investigation to determine if they are linked to an oil spill or other environmental condition.

- Numerous dead fish or other aquatic life in the water or on the shore.
- Odor complaints in a limited geographic area.
- Reports of sheen or slick on coastal waters, unlikely to be related to this oil spill.
- Poison Center Calls in a limited geographic area with similar symptoms.

Note: If the investigation of these events reveals that the issues are related to the oil spill incident, a health advisory may be issued. Recommended courses of action will be determined at that time.

