

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT NO-CONTACT ADVISORIES FOLLOWING SEWAGE SPILLS OR COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS (CSOs)

WHAT IS A NO-CONTACT ADVISORY?

During a no-contact advisory, the public is advised to avoid contact with the water in the affected area. This means the District recommends against swimming, wading, or types of water recreation or play where water could be swallowed or get in the mouth, nose or eyes. People should also avoid direct skin contact if possible, and immediately wash with soap and water if they have exposure to the water.

CAN I GET SICK IF I PLAY OR SWIM IN THE WATER?

Yes, it is possible, but it's not a huge risk unless you ingest water or eat shellfish collected in the impacted area. If you have contact with the water, you should immediately wash your hands with soap and water.

CAN MY PET GET SICK IF IT PLAYS OR SWIMS IN THE WATER?

It is possible since animals can ingest water while swimming.

IS IT SAFE TO BOAT, KAYAK OR CANOE IN THE AFFECTED AREAS?

The answer to this question depends on two things: 1) How close are you to the location of the spill? and 2) How effectively can you avoid ingesting or coming into direct skin contact with the water? The greater your distance from the source of the spill, the less risk you'll have of coming into contact with contaminants associated with the spill. The closer you are to the source of the spill, the higher the risk of coming in contact with contaminants. The same reasoning applies to the level of risk associated with ingesting or coming into direct contact with the water --- the more likely you are to ingest or contact the water through your boating activity, the higher the risk of coming into contact with contaminants from the spill. Generally speaking, a No Contact Advisory is a recommendation from the Health District to avoid ingesting or having direct contact with the water since contaminants may be present.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I CHOOSE TO BOAT, KAYAK OR CANOE?

You should wash your hands with soap and water and rinse your boat off after boating or kayaking in affected areas. Additionally, with small boats there is a risk of capsizing. If you do capsize, avoid ingesting water and shower thoroughly afterward.

CAN I EAT SHELLFISH COLLECTED FROM THE AREAS INCLUDED IN THE ADVISORY?

No. After a sewage spill or Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) you should not collect or consume shellfish from any part of the affected area. Additionally, crabbing or fishing activities in the affected area can increase the risk of exposure to pathogens.

WILL I GET IN TROUBLE IF I SWIM IN AN AFFECTED AREA DURING THE ADVISORY?

No. A no-contact advisory is an advisory or a recommendation. Because there is a risk of becoming sick, we are advising people to avoid contact with the water as a precaution, but there is no enforcement of the advisory.

IS THE SMELL AT LOW TIDE CAUSED BY THE SEWER SPILL?

Unless you are very close to the location of the source of a sewage spill (such as the broken pipe), is very unlikely you are smelling the sewer spill. The sewer-like smell that sometimes occurs during low tide, especially on hot summer days, is the bacteria decomposing seaweed on the shoreline.

HOW LONG WILL THE NO-CONTACT ADVISORY BE IN EFFECT?

Most advisories are in effect for 5 or 7 days after the sewage or CSO discharge stops. The duration of the advisory is determined by the volume of the sewage spill or CSO. All beach and stream advisories and their end-dates are posted at www.kitsappublichealth.org/beaches.



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