

SCGOVNEWS

Sarasota County Communications
scgov.net | 941-861-5000



NEWSROOM

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

Jan. 16, 2013

Media contacts:

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

Curt Preisser, 941-861-5884; cell 941-650-2883 ; cpreisse@scgov.net

Increased red tide levels detected on Sarasota County beaches

Recent beach water samples collected by the Sarasota County Health Department and analyzed by Mote Marine Laboratory for the algae red tide (*Karenia brevis*) show a marked increase over test results from last week. Higher levels of *Karenia brevis* were found at several Sarasota County beaches, including Siesta Beach, Nokomis Beach, Venice Beach and others.

The largest increases are reported from Turtle Beach at Midnight Pass Road southward to Blind Pass Beach at 6725 Manasota Key Road. This includes the Paw Park at South Brohard Beach, 1600 Harbor Drive South in Venice. These increased concentrations are consistent with the northward movement of a concentrated red tide patch from Charlotte Harbor to Sarasota County during the last few days.

Sarasota County lifeguards are reporting slight to moderate respiratory irritation caused by red tide's airborne toxins blowing ashore at various beaches, as well as some dead fish washing ashore in various locations. Beachgoers may experience coughing, sneezing, scratchy throat or teary eyes. These effects should be temporary and go away when those affected leave the beach. However, people with asthma or other chronic respiratory impairments should be aware of places where red tide impacts are being reported and should avoid those areas. Red tide can trigger their conditions and potentially cause serious impacts. If persons experience symptoms – especially if they have chronic lung impairment – health officials advise they avoid red tide areas.

It's also important to note that since winds are variable, conditions can change frequently throughout the day. For those who are susceptible, the symptoms associated with red tide tend to become more noticeable when the winds are blowing onshore.

County Health officials also are advising pet owners to take precautions when bringing pets to the beach. Dogs that lick their fur or paws after swimming in red tide areas, or eat dead fish on the beach, may experience gastrointestinal illness or other symptoms from ingesting toxins, which can be harmful to their health. Pets should not be allowed to consume or play with dead fish and they should be rinsed with clear water after a beach swim.

County officials remain hopeful that a cold front predicted for Thursday will result in a change in wind patterns that will reduce the effects of red tide over the weekend.

"Beachgoers are encouraged to check the Mote beach report before they go to the beach as conditions can change daily," said Tom Higginbotham, Sarasota County Health Department Environmental Health Administrator.

The Mote Marine Laboratory's Beach Conditions Report is updated twice a day and can be accessed online at www.mote.org/beaches. Residents and visitors can also register to receive email reports about specific beaches. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES (232-2437) and press "1" for Sarasota County beaches.

For the latest red tide status reports and general information about red tide, visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) website at MyFWC.com/Research. The FWC-Mote Cooperative Facebook page is www.facebook.com/FLHABs.

