



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 16, 2010

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Four cases of paralytic shellfish poisoning reported in Alaska

Three with symptoms in Kodiak; one in Juneau

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation today announces four suspected cases of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) have been reported in Alaska. PSP is a potentially lethal toxin that can lead to fatal respiratory paralysis.

Three cases have been reported in Kodiak, one in Juneau. In Kodiak one patient with symptoms remains hospitalized in stable condition, and the other two with more mild symptoms are recovering at home. In Juneau, one patient with symptoms is hospitalized and in stable condition.

In Kodiak, the three reported cases are associated with eating Butter Clams dug at Chiniack Beach and Middle Bay and in the "Mayflower" area. At least one individual collected clams over the weekend. In Juneau, one case appears linked to eating Cockles--a type of hardshell clam—gathered on Monday from the Point Louisa end of Auke Bay.

DEC warns harvesters not to eat shellfish from beaches not certified as safe. There are no beaches certified as safe for shellfish collection in Kodiak, or populated areas of Southeast Alaska. Current low tides may prompt recreational and subsistence harvesters to go in search of shellfish.

The DEC warning does not apply to commercially grown and harvested shellfish available in grocery stores and restaurants. They are tested regularly before going to the market.

PSP is diagnosed through clinical symptoms, such as shortness of breath, tingling, dizziness and numbness. People who eat shellfish collected from uncertified beaches should be aware of PSP symptoms. Vomiting should be induced at their onset, and medical attention should be sought immediately.

Last year records show one reported case of PSP in Alaska. There were none in 2008 and one in 2007. Information on previous cases of PSP in Alaska available at: [www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/catlist.jsp?cattype=Paralytic+Shellfish+Poisoning+\(PSP\)](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/catlist.jsp?cattype=Paralytic+Shellfish+Poisoning+(PSP)).

PSP occurs when filter-feeding shellfish like clams and mussels ingest algae and store any toxins in their edible body tissue. More information on PSP: www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss/seafood/psphome.htm.