



Charlie Crist
Governor

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Residents advised to avoid tar balls at beaches
- Plus, tips to avoid negative health impacts from oiled shores -

FT WALTON BEACH – As the oil sheen from the Deepwater Horizon spill moves offshore of Okaloosa County, the Okaloosa County Health Department continues to advise residents to avoid contact with tar balls that may be in the water or on shore. The general public should not attempt to clean beaches. Trained professionals are cleaning up the beaches.

What are tar balls?

Tar balls are fragments or lumps of oil weathered to a semi-solid or solid consistency, feel sticky, and are difficult to remove. They range in size from a pinhead to approximately 30 centimeters in diameter.

Are they harmful?

Tar balls are not harmful – they are a nuisance. If you walk barefoot on the beach in the impacted areas, you may ultimately find tar residue on your feet.

Tar on the skin

Individuals should avoid contact with tar balls. However, if an individual's skin comes into contact with tar:

1. Wash with soap and large amounts of water. Health officials discourage the use of gasoline, kerosene or other solvents to clean oil from skin.
2. If tar is not removed with soap and water, scrape off the excess tar from your skin and apply a grease removing agent – such as a grease-fighting dish detergent -- or mineral oil. Rinse your skin with large amounts of fresh water.
3. Remove contaminated clothing.
4. If symptoms or irritation occur, call a physician.

General Tips for Avoiding Negative Health Impacts from Oiled Shores:

- Avoid entering areas where oil can be seen or smelled (no wading, swimming or entering the water).
- Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil-contaminated water and sediments.
- Avoid contact with dead or dying fish or other aquatic life.
- 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 the skin, wash it off with soap 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.
- Those near Florida's Gulf Coast may detect an odor because of the oil spill. Some people are more sensitive to these odors and may experience nasal irritation and feelings of



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nausea. In combination with seasonal allergies, such as sensitivity to pollen, or pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, some people may experience more severe symptoms.

- Individuals experiencing respiratory symptoms that are aggravated by the odors from the oil spill should consider:
 - Staying indoors in air-conditioning and avoiding strenuous outdoor activity.
 - If symptoms do not improve, contact a primary care physician or other health care provider for medical advice.
 - Individuals who have pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma or other respiratory illnesses should contact their healthcare professional if feeling symptomatic.

For additional information, individuals can:

- Visit www.HealthyOkaloosa.com/Deepwater_Horizon
- Call the Florida Oil Spill Information Line at 1-888-337-3569
- Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 with oil spill health related concerns.

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