

# NEWS RELEASE



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## Illinois Monitoring Possible Algal Bloom on the Illinois River

*Residents advised to be cautious when recreating and be aware of blue-green algae*

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois officials have been alerted to a possible algal bloom on the Illinois River and are actively monitoring conditions to keep communities and residents informed. Illinois residents are advised to use caution while recreating in, on, or near Illinois rivers, lakes and streams as blue-green algae may bloom in these waters. Some blue-green algae can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals. Blue-green algae (also known as a cyanobacteria) are microscopic organisms that naturally occur in lakes and streams.

Currently, Illinois officials are monitoring water conditions on the Illinois River primarily in a stretch from Morris, Illinois to Lacon, Illinois. A blue-green algal “bloom,” which occurs with the rapid growth of algae, has been documented along that stretch of the river. Initial screening of a water sample taken near Hennepin, Illinois indicates an elevated level of the algal toxin, microcystin. Additional testing of samples collected will be completed this week. Illinois EPA is also establishing a sampling schedule and coordinating visual reconnaissance with its partners for other areas along the river.

Algal toxins (e.g., microcystin and cylindrospermopsin) sometimes produced by blue-green algae can cause sickness or other adverse health effects in people and pets, depending on the amount and type of exposure. The very young, elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are most at risk. Adverse health effects attributable to algal toxins can occur from direct skin contact, swallowing contaminated water, or inhaling water droplets in the air. Symptoms of exposure include rashes, hives, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing or wheezing. More severe symptoms may result from longer or greater amounts of exposure.

People who plan to recreate in, on, or near Illinois rivers, lakes or streams are advised to avoid contact with water that:

- looks like spilled, green or blue-green paint
- has surface scums, mats, or films
- is discolored or has green-colored streaks
- has greenish globs suspended in the water below the surface

Do not let pets drink from water with any of the above characteristics.

## Illinois River Algae/2

If you or your pet have come into contact with water you suspect may have a bloom of blue-green algae, rinse off with clean, fresh water as soon as possible. With all activities that may involve contact with lake or stream water, wash your hands before eating.

If you are concerned you have symptoms that are a result of exposure to algal toxins, contact your health care provider or call the Illinois Poison Center at [1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222). If your pet experiences symptoms that may be a result of exposure, contact your veterinarian.

For additional information about harmful algal blooms, please visit:

Illinois Department of Public Health:

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/toxicology/habs>

Illinois EPA:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/water-quality/monitoring/algal-bloom/index>



Above pictures are examples of blue-green algae blooms in Illinois.

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