



To: Local Health Officers

From: Interagency Working Group on Harmful Algal Bloom Related Illnesses

Date: April 11, 2018

The purpose of this letter is to bring attention to the upcoming harmful algal bloom (HAB) season and to offer assistance for responding to blooms in your jurisdiction. We are also requesting your assistance with reporting HAB events and HAB-related human and animal illnesses to the state centralized system described below. Local Health Departments play a key role in warning the public about the dangers associated with local HABs.

The occurrence of HABs appears to be increasing in inland waters of California, which has led to an increase in the public's concern regarding potential health impacts to humans and animals, particularly dogs. In 2017, state and local agencies posted [141 public health alerts at waterbodies throughout California](#). Reported HAB-related incidents last year included 25 domestic animal deaths, numerous fish and wildlife incidents, and 8 human incidents. Most blooms occur in spring to fall, but can begin earlier or continue year-round in some locations.

Please use one of the following options to report HAB occurrences and HAB-related human and animal illnesses (suspected or confirmed) to the centralized database. Your reports will alert us of your need for assistance and will expedite state efforts to track the frequency, distribution and impacts of HABs in California:

- Online: [Freshwater Bloom Incident Form](#)
- Telephone: 1 (844) 729-6466 (toll free)
- Email: CyanoHAB.Reports@waterboards.ca.gov.

Reporting a HAB incident through any of the options above will trigger a multi-agency coordination effort consisting of the following:

- The California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) will contact your department to collect additional information on reports of a human or animal illness that may be HAB-related. CDPH is implementing California's HAB-related human and animal illness reporting to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System (OHHABS).
- If the reported illness involves fish or wildlife, OEHHA will inform the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and assist in collecting the relevant data.
- All HAB reports will prompt staff from the California Water Boards to contact the Local Health Department to assist with the HAB identification and early response.

Health Departments are encouraged to use the [signs and guidance](#) prepared by the [California Cyanobacteria and Harmful Algal Bloom \(CCHAB\) Network](#) for posting public health alerts at water bodies when HABs pose a health threat. Several additional resources are available through the [California HABs Portal](#), including a field [sampling guide](#), an [up-to-date map of known HAB occurrences in California](#), a [veterinarian factsheet](#), and [other important HAB-related information](#). [Symptoms of HAB-related illness](#) in people and animals are available from the CDC and by contacting the California Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222). These resources focus on inland HABs occurring in freshwater, estuarine and lagoon environments. For information on HABs in coastal marine areas, refer to CDPH's [Marine Biotoxin Monitoring Program](#) and [CalHABMAP](#).

Resources for responding to HABs are extremely limited throughout the state. Our agencies are attempting to coordinate and support a HAB response involving multiple agencies at several levels of government in order to protect the public and the environment from the adverse impacts of HABs. Additionally, data collection and tracking are valuable tools for estimating the impact of HABs and identifying efforts that would help to address HABs statewide.

Please contact the staff listed below with feedback or questions relating to these efforts.

CEHTP: Susan Paulukonis (Susan.Paulukonis@cdph.ca.gov; 510-620-3667)

OEHHA: Beckye Stanton (Rebecca.Stanton@oehha.ca.gov; 916-322-2088) and Reggie Linville (Regina.Linville@oehha.ca.gov; 916-327-7336)

State Water Resources Control Board: Marisa VanDyke (Marisa.VanDyke@waterboards.ca.gov; 916-322-8431) and Ali Dunn (Ali.Dunn@Waterboards.ca.gov; 916-319-8458);

CDFW: Stella McMillin (Stella.McMillin@wildlife.ca.gov; 916-358-2954) and Krysta Rogers (Krysta.Rogers@wildlife.ca.gov; 916-358-1662)