

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2020

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What you should know about Beach Advisories in Iowa



Beach advisories help you make informed decisions on the best time to enjoy Iowa's lakes and beaches.

DES MOINES – When summer hits, there's nothing better than cooling off at one of Iowa's lakes or beaches. Iowa's DNR tests the water at beaches weekly so you can enjoy it safely. Beach advisories help you make the best choices about when to swim and when to hold off. By staying informed, you can enjoy the outdoors with confidence.

What Is Tested?

E. coli is a type of bacteria found in the intestines of people and animals. Most strains are harmless, but its presence in beach water can signal that other, more harmful bacteria, viruses, or other pathogens may be present too. That's why Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) monitors *E. coli* levels weekly throughout the summer.

In addition to *E. coli* monitoring, the program tracks microcystins. Microcystins toxins produced by certain types of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that often form green, paint-like scums or mats on the surface of warm, nutrient-rich water. These toxins pose health risks but have been a relatively minor issue in recent years, with only 2% to 7% of sampling events resulting in advisories. In 2024, just seven beaches had microcystin-related warnings.

When Does the DNR Issue Advisories?

The DNR tests beach water from Memorial Day to Labor day. It issues advisories when:

E. coli levels exceed safety thresholds:

- **126 CFU/100mL (geometric mean)**
- **235 CFU/100mL (single sample)**

Microcystin levels exceed safety thresholds:

- **8 micrograms per liter (µg/L)**

If levels go beyond these limits, an advisory is posted—*not a closure, but a heads up to use caution.*

What Does a Beach Advisory Mean for You?

A beach advisory means the water may carry a higher risk of causing minor illnesses like diarrhea or nausea—especially if you swallow water. If you're here and just wading, you're likely fine if you rinse off after and wash your hands before eating. But if you have young kids, a weakened immune system, or plan to fully submerge and may ingest water during swimming, you may want to wait until it drops. Stay out of areas with algae, especially if it has the appearance of oily paint on the surface.

How Risky Is It?

- At around 235 CFU/100ml (CFU = Colony Forming Units), the estimated illness rate is about 36 minor illnesses per 1,000 swimmers
- As the **CFU/100mL results get larger**, the potential risk for minor illnesses goes up, especially for those who swallow water.

Beyond water quality, do you know all the risks?

While the DNR provides information about the quality of the water at beaches, most injuries and fatalities come from drowning.

- Be sure to watch children, know your limits and remember that lake bottoms are inconsistent and deep holes exist.
- Lifejackets for swimming can save lives! In the spring, it might be warmer outside, but the water hasn't had time to warm up, and cold water can reduce body temperature quickly, drastically increasing the risk of drowning.

The Bottom Line:

Iowa's lakes offer opportunities for fun and relaxation, but it's important to stay aware of the potential risks when enjoying the open water. By staying informed about water quality and following safety guidelines, you can help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. So, get out there and make the most of Iowa's beautiful lakes—**just remember to be safe and take the necessary precautions!**

DNR enforcement actions

MEDIA CONTACT: Tamara McIntosh, DNR, at 515-901-3294
or Tamara.McIntosh@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES – DNR staff work with individuals, businesses and communities to help them protect our natural resources by complying with state and federal law. This approach is very effective. In the few cases where compliance cannot be achieved, the DNR issues enforcement actions. The following list summarizes recent enforcement actions. Find the entire, original orders on DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions

Consent Orders A consent order is issued as an alternative to issuing an administrative order. A consent order indicates that the DNR has voluntarily entered into a legally enforceable agreement with the other party.

Butler County

Jayne Quario

Cease all illegal open burning and open dumping activity; properly dispose of remaining waste on site at a landfill and submit disposal receipts; and pay a stipulated \$2,000 administrative penalty.

Johnson County

Timber Trails Home Owners Association, Inc.

Cease all illegal discharges to waters of the state; submit a compliance plan for approval that identifies the actions to be taken to address the chloride effluent violations with performance dates; complete all necessary actions no later than June 30, 2026; and pay a \$500 administrative penalty.

Mahaska County

Mahaska County Solid Waste Management Commission

Comply with all laws and regulations regarding solid waste disposal, including but not limited to the laws related to the operation of the leachate collection system at the landfill; manage all leachate generated at the landfill in a manner that avoids unpermitted pollution to a water of the state; and pay a \$10,000 administrative penalty.

Administrative Orders

Responsible parties have 60 days to appeal the order or 60 days to pay the penalty.

Air quality permits for review

MEDIA CONTACT: Marnie Stein, DNR, at 515-238-1887

or Marnie.Stein@dnr.iowa.gov for Title V permits; or Peter Zayudis, DNR 515-201-4596 or Peter.Zayudis@dnr.iowa.gov for Construction permits.

DES MOINES – The DNR Air Quality Bureau has the following draft permits u review. The permits help protect lowans’ health and the air where we live. DNI permitting staff review the applications to ensure facilities comply with state ar federal air quality standards. The public has the right and is encouraged to comment on draft permits. DNR considers [public comments](#) before finalizing t permits. Submit comments in writing to the assigned permit writer before 4:30 on the last day of the comment period.

Title V Operating Permits

Title V Operating permits are reviewed and re-issued every five years. Facilities with a Title V permit have the potential to emit large amounts of air pollutants compared to other facilities. The five-year reviews are a federal requirement a ensure adequate monitoring is included in the permit. The DNR plans to issue V Operating Permits for the following facilities. Find permit details at www.iowadnr.gov/titlev-draft or through the [Iowa EASY Air Public Inquiry Portal](#) and then click on the Public Notice tab.

Dallas CountyGlen-Gery Corporation - Adel – 1831 W Main Street, Adel.The application was submitted to operate their existing brick and structural clay tile facility (SIC 3251). The public comment period ends June 21.

Construction Permits

DNR engineers review and issue construction permits to facilities before they new or modify existing sources of air pollution. The public may review the follc air quality construction permits available online at <https://idnraqrr.iowadnr.gov/ConPermitSearch> or through the [EASY Air Public Inquiry Portal](#) and then click Public Notice tab.

Pottawattamie County

Bunge North America, Inc. (“Bunge”) – 19560 Bunge Ave, Council Bluffs, IA
Project No. 25-133

Bunge operates a Soybean Processing Plant. This project is for the amendme PSD Construction Permit No. 97-A-393-P3 (Meal Finishing, EP MF1) to reflecc proposed replacement of the existing meal finishing baghouse.

Public comment period ends on June 20.



www.iowadnr.gov

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