

DEP ANNOUNCES RESPONSE STRATEGY FOR FRESHWATER HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS, SEEKS PUBLIC'S HELP TO IDENTIFY SUSPECTED INCIDENTS

STATEWIDE EFFORT TO 'AVOID IT AND REPORT IT' INCLUDES ONLINE FORM FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED BLOOMS

(17/P84) TRENTON – Seeking to minimize health risks for people and animals, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has developed a strategy for a unified statewide approach in responding to incidents of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in freshwater bodies across the state.



Under the new **Avoid It and Report It** effort, anyone who sees a suspected bloom resulting from cyanobacteria may contact DEP through its toll-free hotline or the WARN NJDEP app for smartphones and tablets. In addition, a new [HAB website](#) has been launched to coordinate important information and response activities. Alerting DEP to the suspected blooms quickly can help protect public and animal health and freshwater resources.

“Expanding our ability to respond to Harmful Algal Blooms, establishing preparedness procedures, and making information about these blooms more readily available to the public enables DEP and its partners to better protect the health of those who use New Jersey’s lakes and streams for recreation,” said Dan Kennedy,

Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources Management.

Most algal blooms observed in New Jersey’s waterways are harmless and are not cyanobacteria. They result from too many nutrients causing excessive blooms of naturally present algae.

Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae are usually a bright green, but can also appear as spilled paint, “pea soup,” or as having a thick coating or “mat” on the surface. They can often be confused for typical algae blooms.

Cyanobacteria are also naturally present in lakes and streams in low numbers. Under suitable environmental conditions – sunlight, high nutrients, warm temperatures and calm water – dense cyanobacterial blooms can form.

Cyanobacterial blooms do not always produce toxins, but when they do the blooms can pose a risk to people, pets, livestock and wildlife if exposure occurs by ingestion, inhalation of contaminated water, or dermal contact. Rashes can occur when cyanobacteria cells come in contact with skin.

When a suspicious bloom is observed, people are advised to **Avoid It and Report It** by following these steps:

- Avoid contact with water in the vicinity of the bloom, especially in areas where the bloom is dense and forms scums;
- Do not drink or consume the water;
- Do not eat fish from the waterbody;
- Keep pets and livestock away from the water;
- Do not allow animals to drink the water, eat dried algae, or groom themselves after coming into contact with the water;
- People, pets and livestock that come into contact with a bloom should rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible;
- Seek medical attention or a veterinarian if a person or animal is experiencing adverse health effects after exposure to a bloom;
- **Report a suspected HAB by calling the DEP Hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP (927-6337) or send a mobile alert through the WARN NJDEP mobile app (available via iTunes, Google Play or Windows Phone).**

The new response strategy, developed jointly by the DEP and the state Department of Health (DOH), with technical input from the state Department of Agriculture, protects the public from risks associated with exposure to cyanobacteria and related toxins.