

News Release

July 21, 2017

Algae-related Toxin Detected in Jordan River

A low level of anatoxin-a means people and pets should stay out of the water itself, but recreational activities like boating should not present a threat to health

(Salt Lake County)—The Salt Lake County Health Department (SLCoHD) received test results late today that show a low level (0.1 micrograms per liter) of an algae-related toxin called anatoxin-a present in the Jordan River.

The EPA “action level” for this toxin is any detection of its presence, so health officials advise people to not enter the water itself, and to keep dogs from entering or drinking river water. Toxins present at this level have not been shown to present a health threat to people on the surface of the river, such as while kayaking or boating.

The samples that showed evidence of the toxin were taken from the Jordan Narrows, where the Jordan River enters Salt Lake County, but officials are advising caution for the entire river as algae and toxins can spread and change quickly.

SLCoHD will post warning signs at Wheeler Farm in Murray and Blackridge Reservoir in Herriman due to their popularity as recreational points, but no potentially affected water bodies in Salt Lake County are closed to access at this time.

SLCoHD will continue to monitor and sample the Jordan River and its related canals and will update advisories as necessary.

Although blue-green algae are a natural part of many freshwater ecosystems, under the right conditions they can expand rapidly. High levels of nutrients in the water, combined with warm temperatures, abundant sunlight, and calm water, can promote growth, resulting in blooms that consist of cyanobacteria (often referred to as blue-green algae), a type of bacteria that can create toxins that pose a risk to humans and animals.

Symptoms of exposure include headache, fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, and sometimes allergic-like reactions from skin contact.

For concerns about possible human exposure, call the Utah Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 or contact your health care provider.

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