

NOAA tests for Gulf of Mexico contaminates

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U.S. officials say tests of white shrimp samples collected the week of Sept. 12 from the Mississippi Sound found no elevated contaminants.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Wednesday it collected 23 samples of white shrimp from Mobile Bay to Lake Borgne two weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit the U.S. Gulf Coast. The samples were tested for hydrocarbon exposure due to oil spills or urban runoffs, and other contaminants, such as PCBs and DDTs.

Scientists said their analyses found PCB levels less than 5 parts per billion and DDT levels less than 2 ppb -- both well within U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines for consumption.

NOAA also tested samples of shrimp caught prior to Hurricane Katrina and found similarly low levels of toxins.

Federal scientists are currently analyzing samples collected the week of Sept. 26 and on Oct. 17 from areas most likely to have been affected by delayed releases of toxic substances, such as the mouth of the Mississippi River and the western Mississippi Sound, where water from Lake Pontchartrain enters the Gulf of Mexico.

NOAA said it will collect and test samples at least through the end of the year to monitor environmental changes.

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