

NOAA adds red tide alerts to Beach Hazards Statements

February 4 2013

NOAA has added a new service to alert the public when red tides threaten human health at Tampa Bay area beaches. The new alert is timely since many of southwest Florida's beaches are experiencing or are under threat of red tide.

The alert is part of a broader experimental initiative NOAA's National Weather Service has been testing since June 2012, called the "Beach Hazards Statement," which also alerts the public for coastal hazards such as [rip currents](#). The Tampa Bay weather forecast office is the first to issue the Beach Hazard Statements to provide coastal residents and visitors with information to protect their safety. NWS is partnering with NOAA's National Ocean Service to provide these alerts to the public.

"Red tides can have significant environmental impacts and threaten the health of some people," said Richard Edwing, director of NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services.

"Currently, the National Ocean Service forecasts harmful [algal blooms](#) to give state and local organizations advanced warning and therefore more options to manage the impacts. Through this partnership with the National Weather Service, we can broaden public awareness about harmful algal blooms, their potential impacts and possible precautionary measures."

[Red tide](#) can cause acute respiratory problems for people, especially those suffering from asthma, emphysema or other chronic respiratory disorder. The Tampa Bay weather forecast office will issue a Beach

Hazards Statement for red tide when its sister organization at NOAA's National Ocean Service forecasts a potential for moderate or high respiratory impacts along southwest Florida, extending from Levy County south to Lee County.

Red tide is the common term for the harmful algal bloom species, *Karenia brevis*. NOAA's National Ocean Service has been providing operational forecasts for harmful algal blooms of *Karenia brevis* in the Gulf of Mexico since 2004. The [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#)'s Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla., and the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, Fla., provide NOAA with expertise and data to identify and track harmful algal blooms in the Gulf.

"Beach Hazards Statements for [harmful algal blooms](#) will be a valuable supplement to the FWC's statewide red tide status reports," said Gil McRae, director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. "We look forward to continuing to share our monitoring information with NOAA to enhance this important resource."

Beach Hazards Statements for the Tampa Bay area are found here, and will be broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and other [National Weather Service](#) systems, for broader dissemination. The public is invited to comment on the usefulness of the Beach Hazard Statements and to help NOAA evaluate whether the statements should be used in other parts of the country.

Provided by NOAA Headquarters

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