October 28, 2026

DOH-Bay Issues Red Tide Health Alert for Mexico Beach

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Bay County, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health in Bay County (DOH-Bay) has issued a health alert for the presence of red tide near Mexico Beach. This is in response to water samples taken on October 26, 2026. The public should exercise caution in and around this area.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions if near affected area:

- Look for informational signage posted at most public beaches and/or check current water quality status at Protecting Florida Together.
- Do not wade or swim in or around red tide. Red tide can cause skin irritation, rashes, and burning/sore eyes.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and fresh water if you have had recent contact with red tide, especially if your skin is easily irritated.
- Remain cautious and stay away from this location, especially if you have chronic respiratory conditions.
- Residents living in beach areas are advised to close windows and run the air conditioner. Make sure the air conditioner filter is maintained according to manufacturer's specifications.
- Do not harvest or eat molluscan shellfish or distressed or dead fish from this location. If caught alive and healthy, finfish are safe to eat as long as they are filleted, and the guts are discarded. Rinse fillets with tap or bottled water.
- Red tide can cause illness and death of other animals, such as pets and livestock. Keep animals away and out of the water and sea life and away from dead marine life. If your pet swims in waters with red tide, wash them with soap and water as soon as possible.

What is Red Tide?

Red tide is caused by high concentrations of a toxin-producing dinoflagellate called *Karenia brevis* (*K. brevis*), a type of microscopic algae found in the Gulf of Mexico. Red tide typically forms naturally offshore, commonly in late summer or early fall, and is carried into coastal waters by winds and currents.

At high enough concentrations, *K. brevis* can discolor water and give it a red or brown hue. To learn more about the appearance of red tide, visit Protecting Florida Together.

Is Red Tide Harmful?

K. brevis produces potent neurotoxins (brevotoxins) that can be harmful to the humans, pets, fish, and wildlife. Wind and wave action can break open *K. brevis* cells and release toxins into the air. This is why you should monitor conditions and use caution when visiting affected water bodies. People can experience varying degrees of eye, skin, and respiratory irritation from red tide. Sensitive individuals (e.g., children, the elderly, those who are immunocompromised, and

those who have chronic respiratory conditions) may be at risk of experiencing more severe symptoms.

For additional information on potential health effects of algae blooms, visit the Florida Department of Health's harmful algae blooms webpage.

Where Can I Find Current Water Status Information?

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission routinely collects and analyzes red tide samples from around the state. Current information about Florida's water quality status and public health notifications for harmful algae blooms and beach conditions is available at Protecting Florida Together. You can subscribe to receive notifications when water quality changes in your area.

To hear a recording about red tide conditions throughout the state, call the toll-free hotline at 866-300-9399.

For local licensed shellfish harvesting status, visit the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Where Can I Report Issues Related to Red Tide?

- **Human Health:** Report symptoms from exposure to a harmful algae bloom or any aquatic toxin to the Florida Poison Information Center by calling 800-222-1222 to speak to a poison specialist.
- **Animal Health:** Contact your veterinarian if you believe your pet has become ill after consuming or having contact with red tide contaminated water.
- **Fish Kills:** Dead, diseased, or abnormally behaving fish or wildlife should be reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission online or at 800-636-0511.

If you have other health questions or concerns about red tide blooms, please call DOH-Bay at 850-481-4812.

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The Department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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