



**Benton-Franklin
Health District**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Toxic Algae in Columbia River Nears Peak Season: Use Caution

Recent samples at Howard Amon Park had anatoxin-a levels exceeding the state threshold.

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RICHLAND, Wash. – BFHD and its partners have been monitoring for algae toxins in the Columbia River since June. Last week, anatoxin-a levels in the water at **Howard Amon Park** were elevated. On August 17th, more samples were taken which included clumps of algae floating on the surface. These samples had anatoxin-a levels EXCEEDING the state recreational threshold (1 ug/L). Signage in Howard Park will be elevated to “Warning”. Signs will remain up until conditions improve. Any shorelines along the Columbia could potentially have floating mats so BFHD offers caution to all users of the river in B-F Counties.

The greatest risk is the ingestion of the clumps of algae. Dogs and young children are most susceptible.

Dogs are especially at risk. They often drink river water or chew on algae near the shore, increasing the chances of exposure. If your pet enters the water—even in areas without current advisories—follow these safety tips:

- Don't let pets eat or chew on clumps of algae
- Prevent them from licking their fur after swimming
- Rinse pets with clean water immediately after exposure
- Wash your hands and exposed skin after contact
- If your pet becomes sick, contact your veterinarian right away
- Report suspected animal poisonings to BFHD at 509-460-4205

People and animals exposed to anatoxin-a can show symptoms within 15–20 minutes of ingestion. In pets, this may include weakness, staggering, difficulty breathing, seizures and potentially death. In humans, symptoms can include numbness around the mouth, tingling in fingers and toes and dizziness. If symptoms occur, seek medical care immediately.

To stay informed, visit the BFHD website for testing results, advisories and tips on identifying and reporting toxic algae: [Toxic Algae Blooms - Benton Franklin Health District](#)

Please note: Other local water bodies, such as the Yakima River, are not tested regularly because past monitoring has not shown detectable levels of toxins. **However, BFHD encourages the public to report any visible signs of algae in lakes, rivers and streams across Benton and Franklin counties.**



Photos of benthic algae in the Columbia River taken by James Coleman, BFHD.

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