



## Government of Yukon

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# HEALTHalert

FOR RELEASE #10-121  
June 25, 2010

### Yukon residents cautioned against harvesting shellfish in Juneau and Haines

WHITEHORSE – Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Brendan Hanley, is warning Yukon residents to avoid a popular pastime if they are going to Haines, Juneau or Kodiak, Alaska.

"We have been advised, by the Alaskan state epidemiologist, there have been episodes of paralytic shellfish poisoning in these three locations from personally harvesting shellfish," Hanley said. "Given that many Yukon residents go to Juneau or Haines for holidays or weekends, we felt it is important to share this information."

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) routinely tests commercially-harvested shellfish to test the levels of saxitoxin and ensure the commercially collected shellfish are safe to consume. Because testing is not routinely performed at recreational beaches in Alaska, personal harvesting of shellfish is not considered safe to consume. Shellfish includes scallops, clams, oysters and mussels. The DEC is also warning against consuming personally harvested crabs that might have eaten contaminated shellfish.

Paralytic shellfish poisoning or PSP is sometimes referred to as "red tide". It is a serious, potentially fatal illness, which is caused by eating shellfish contaminated with algae that produces a powerful neurotoxin. The toxin cannot be destroyed by heat. As there is no antidote, prompt supportive treatment of affected individuals is essential. There have already been three deaths attributed to this recent incident.

For more information, visit <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-qp/contamination/psp-eng.htm>.

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