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Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) on Owasco Lake

The Cayuga County Health Department would like to inform the public that Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) have been reported on Owasco Lake, yesterday, Thursday, July 23, 2020 and are anticipated to continue due to the warm weather expected. The Health Department has closed the beach at the Y camp. When there is no longer the presence of Harmful Algal Blooms, water samples from the swimming area of this beach will be collected and sent for analysis. The Health Department will notify the Y camp when the beach may re-open.

The public is encouraged to “Know It, Avoid It and Report It.”

KNOW IT

Bodies of water that are discolored with a paint-like or filmy appearance or floating scum should always be avoided as they are potentially harmful. Images of these types of blooms as well as non-harmful blooms can be viewed at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/81962.html>.

AVOID IT

Always stay away from blooms in lakes or streams. Never swim, fish, boat, wade or eat fish caught in areas with blooms. Bloom or no bloom, never drink, prepare food, cook, or make ice with a private water supply drawn directly from a lake that is untreated or improperly treated. During a bloom, private water supplies drawn directly from the lake should not be used for showering, bathing, or washing dishes even if treatment is provided. Public water supplies that draw water from lake water are treated, disinfected and monitored. The public would be notified by the Cayuga County Health Department if public water supplies are adversely impacted by HABs.

REPORT IT

If you think that a bloom may be harmful, report it through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC): <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html>. If you feel that you or your pets are experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, irritation of the skin, eyes, or respiratory system due to exposure to a harmful bloom please contact your health care provider or veterinarian.

Owasco Lake is the source of drinking water for the City of Auburn and the Town of Owasco. The water operators at both of the treatment plants routinely monitor for the presence of algae in the water entering the plant and will continue to do so. If the presence of algae is identified entering the treatment plant, samples of the water entering the plant and the treated drinking water will be collected to test for toxins associated with Harmful Algal Blooms.



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Many households draw water from the lake for home use. As a reminder, the Health Department discourages this at all times. Lakefront properties were mailed a post card this year that included this information:

- Never drink water that is drawn from the lake, at any depth, whether or not harmful algal blooms are present. This includes using the water for making infant formula, making ice, brushing teeth and preparing food.
 - In-home treatment units such as boiling, disinfecting water with chlorine or ultraviolet radiation (UV), and water filtration units do not remove the toxins associated with harmful algal blooms.
- If you are drawing water from the lake, avoid bathing and washing dishes when blooms are present.

More information regarding harmful algae blooms can be found at www.cayugacounty.us/health. Any questions or to report any symptoms you think may be related to exposure to harmful algal blooms contact the Cayuga County Health Department at (315) 253-1560.
