

William J. Streur
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 7, 2011

Contact: Greg Wilkinson, (907) 269-7285, Cell (907) 382-7032
gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov
Ann Potempa, (907) 269-7957, Cell (907) 230-4001
ann.potempa@alaska.gov
Ty Keltner, Department of Environmental Conservation, (907) 465-5009, Cell (907) 388-8822,
ty.keltner@alaska.gov

Possible PSP case in Metlakatla

State health investigators looking for other possible victims

ANCHORAGE — An adult man who ate cockles harvested from a beach on Annette Island on Friday, June 3, 2011, developed symptoms characteristic of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP).

The man went to the local clinic that afternoon complaining of weakness in the arms and trouble walking; symptoms consistent with PSP. He was flown to a local hospital and admitted into the intensive care unit for treatment.

Early signs of PSP often include tingling of the lips and tongue. Symptoms may progress to tingling of fingers and toes, then loss of control of arms and legs, followed by difficulty breathing. Death can result in as little as two hours.

Two epidemiologists from the Alaska Section of Epidemiology, and the local public health nurse are in Metlakatla to conduct an investigation to determine how many other people were affected in the community. Anyone who has experienced symptoms after consuming locally harvested shellfish this spring is asked to call the Annette Island Service Unit at 907-886-4741.

All locally harvested shellfish — including clams, mussels, oysters, geoducks and scallops — can contain paralytic shellfish poison. Crabmeat is not known to contain the PSP toxin, but crab guts can contain unsafe levels and should be discarded. PSP cannot be cooked or cleaned out of shellfish. Commercially grown shellfish is tested and considered safe.

Paralytic shellfish poisoning is considered a public health emergency. Suspected cases must be reported immediately to the Section of Epidemiology by health care providers at 907-269-8000 during work hours or 800-478-0084 after hours.

For more information on PSP go to:

http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/marine_toxins/, or
http://www.hss.state.ak.us/pdf/201006_shellfish.pdf

###

DHSS is now on Twitter. Follow health updates at www.twitter.com/Alaska_DHSS.