

William J. Streur  
Commissioner  
P.O. Box 110601  
Juneau, AK 99811-0601  
dhss.alaska.gov



## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 25, 2013

Contact: Greg Wilkinson, 907-269-7285, Cell 907-382-7032

[gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov](mailto:gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov)

Dawnell Smith, 907-269-4541, Cell 907-903-9940, [dawnell.smith@alaska.gov](mailto:dawnell.smith@alaska.gov)

### **Two possible paralytic shellfish poisoning cases reported in Sitka**

*State health officials remind public about risks*

ANCHORAGE — Two probable cases of paralytic shellfish poisoning have been reported to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology. Both were the result of eating shellfish harvested in the Sitka area on Oct. 18, 2013.

After eating two of the clams, the male patient reported tingling in his left hand and lips. He was nauseated and vomited. The female patient had similar symptoms with a headache. Both patients sought care at local emergency departments. Both were treated and released.

Leftover clams were sent to the Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Health laboratory, where analysis revealed the presence of the toxin that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning.

Early signs of paralytic shellfish poisoning (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.

Any 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 of toxin and should be discarded. There is no way to tell if a beach is safe for harvesting by looking at it. Toxins can be present in large amounts even if the water looks clear. Also, the toxin can remain in shellfish long after the algae bloom is over. **PSP cannot be cooked, cleaned or frozen 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.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/psp/default.htm>, or [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/marine\\_toxins/](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/marine_toxins/).

###