



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 6, 2017

17-102

Hawaii Department of Health issues fish and shellfish advisory for Kaneohe Marine Corps Base Fuel Pier and Marina area

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is advising the public not to eat fish and shellfish caught in the Kaneohe Marine Corps Base Hawaii (MCBH) Fuel Pier and Marina Area. Fish from the area may contain unsafe levels of harmful chemicals. Higher risk groups such as pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who are planning a pregnancy and children are especially sensitive to these chemicals. MCBH has issued a catch-and-release restriction for the area where recreational fishing is permitted on a limited basis.

Preliminary tests from two species of whole goatfish caught in the area indicate unsafe levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the fish. Limited sampling of sediment in the area also found PCBs above U.S. EPA and DOH guidelines. Banned in 1976, PCBs are man-made chemicals used extensively in manufacturing transformers, capacitors and other electrical equipment. PCBs stick to soil and sediment and remain in the environment for a long time. Fish accumulate PCBs when eating sediment or smaller fish containing PCBs.

“A single large meal or occasional meals of fish caught in the area are not expected to cause illness from the PCB levels measured by the Navy in whole goatfish,” said DOH Toxicologist Barbara Brooks. “However, frequent eating of contaminated fish from the area over a period of months or years may lead to the build-up of PCBs in the body to levels that may put a person at a higher risk for cancer or other diseases.”

In the past, some people were exposed to very high levels of PCBs at work or from accidental poisoning. These people showed harmful health effects to their skin, eyes, and nerves. Studies with animals showed that high levels of PCBs could harm the liver, digestive tract, and nerves; and could affect development, reproduction, and the immune system.

PCB levels in fish are much lower than levels that may have made people sick in the past from work or accidental poisonings. PCB levels in fish also are much lower than levels given to laboratory animals. Some studies suggest that low levels of PCBs, like those found in some fish, might cause small decreases in children's I.Q. or affect their memory, especially if exposures occur during pregnancy.

An ongoing investigation by the Navy/Marine Corps of the area shows the likely sources of contaminants in the fish were PCB-containing dielectric fluids from electrical transformers that may have leaked or spilled into the soil at the salvage yard. The salvage site was used to store excess construction and building materials during the 1940s and 1950s.

The DOH interim fish advisory will remain in effect until more extensive sampling is completed by the Navy/Marine Corps. DOH will work closely with MCBH to further investigate the impact of PCBs at the salvage yard site and determine if a long-term fish advisory is needed.

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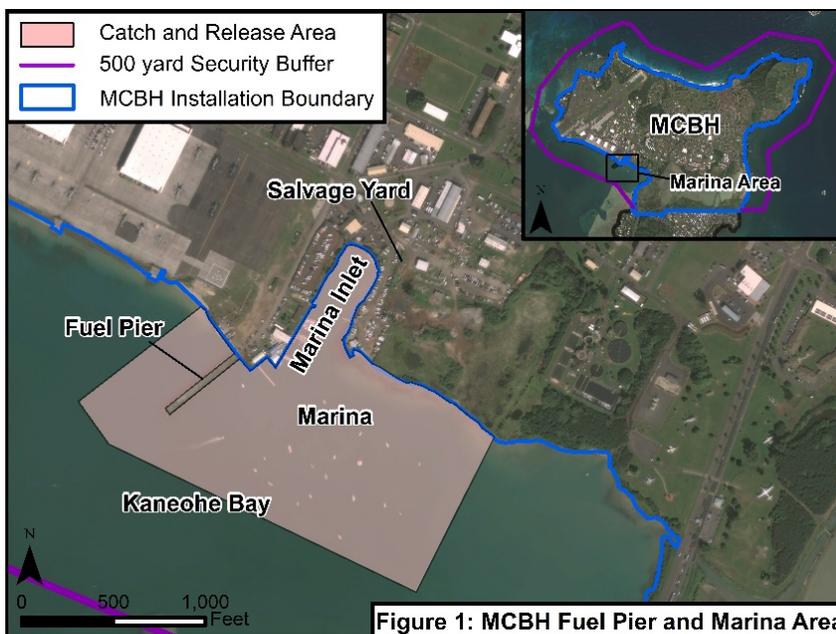


Interim Fish Advisory for Fuel Pier and Marina Area at the Marine Corps Base in Kaneohe, Hawaii

The Hawaii State Department of Health is advising the public not to eat fish and shellfish caught in the Kaneohe Marine Corps Base Fuel Pier and Marina Area, a military protected area within Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Fish caught in this area may contain harmful chemicals. High risk groups such as pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who are planning a pregnancy and children are especially sensitive to these chemicals.

Avoid eating fish from this area until testing is complete.

Preliminary testing indicates that certain fish in the Fuel Pier and Marina Area contain unsafe levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Eating fish and shellfish from this area could harm your health.



Frequently eating PCB-contaminated fish over a period of years may lead to PCBs building up in your body to levels that could affect your health.

The health effects from eating fish contaminated with PCBs depend on

- The concentration of PCBs in the fish you eat,
- How much fish you eat, and
- How long you eat it (for example, over weeks, months, or years).

Health effects also depend on your age, sex, diet, family traits, lifestyle, and overall state of health.

Eating large amounts of fish from this area for many years may put you at higher risk for cancer or other diseases.

What are PCBs?

- PCBs are man-made chemicals banned in the United States since 1976.
- PCBs were used extensively in manufacturing transformers, capacitors and other electrical equipment
- PCBs stick to soil and sediment and remain in the environment for a long time
- Fish take in PCBs when they eat sediment or smaller fish containing PCBs.
- PCBs build up in the fat of fish and can reach levels many times higher than the level in water or sediments.

Studies have linked PCB exposure to these health conditions:¹

In the past, some people were exposed to very high levels of PCBs at work or from accidental poisoning.

- These people showed harmful health effects to their skin, eyes, and nerves.

Studies with animals showed that high levels of PCBs could harm the liver, digestive tract, and nerves; and could affect development, reproduction, and the immune system.

- PCBs have also been found to cause cancer in some animal studies.
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency say that PCBs probably can cause cancer in humans.

PCB levels in fish are much lower than levels that may have made people sick in the past from work or accidental poisonings. PCB levels in fish also are much lower than levels given to laboratory animals.

- Some studies suggest that low levels of PCBs, like those found in some fish, might cause small decreases in children's' I.Q. or affect their memory, especially if exposures occur during pregnancy.

Your risk of cancer or other health effects from eating contaminated fish or shellfish cannot be predicted with certainty.

Some groups are at higher risk for health effects from PCBs:

- Pregnant women,
- Nursing mothers,
- Women who are planning a pregnancy, and
- Children

It is unlikely that you will show obvious signs of harm from PCBs in fish and shellfish.

- At the PCB levels measured by the Navy in whole goatfish from Fuel Pier and Marina Area at MCBH, we would not expect you to become ill from a single large meal or a few fish meals.
- However, frequent eating of PCB-contaminated fish over a period of months or years may lead to the buildup of PCBs that could affect your health.
- To prevent PCBs from causing harmful effects, DOH advises you to stop eating fish from the Fuel Pier and Marina Area at MCBH until further testing is completed.
- Over time, PCBs and other contaminants can slowly clear from your body and lessen your risk.
- To avoid any risk to your health, **follow the DOH fish advisory.**

You can also protect your health by maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

- Get regular exercise;
- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet including fish from uncontaminated waters;

¹ Information from California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (<https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/pcbs-fish-caught-california>)

- Moderate your alcohol intake if you drink; if you smoke, try to quit;
- Get regular medical checkups for yourself and your family; and
- Minimize stress as much as possible.

This interim advisory is based on limited sampling of whole goatfish by the U.S. Navy in the Fuel Pier and Marina Area. More testing will be done.

- The fish were sampled to determine if PCBs from the Salvage Yard are concentrating in recreational fish.
- The testing revealed levels of PCBs that were higher than acceptable.
- Further testing will determine if the fillets versus the whole fish contain unsafe levels of PCBs.

Contacts:

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For more information about DOH oversight of cleanup activities at the Salvage Yard, contact Beryl Ekimoto, beryl.ekimoto@doh.hawaii.gov. For health effects, contact Dr. Barbara Brooks, barbara.brooks@doh.hawaii.gov

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