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PRESS RELEASE

OC HEALTH CARE AGENCY ISSUES HEALTH ADVISORY FOR RESIDENTS EXPOSED TO OIL CONTAMINANTS

(Santa Ana, CA) – In response to the coastal oil spill that occurred Saturday, the OC Health Care Agency’s (HCA), County Health Officer, Dr. Clayton Chau issued a health advisory today to recommend those who may have encountered the contaminated materials to seek medical attention.

“The effects of oil spills on humans may be direct and indirect, depending on the type of contact with the oil spill. People may come in direct contact with oil and/or oil products while walking in a contaminated area (e.g., beach). An initial irritation will be obvious. Additionally, contaminants may be absorbed through the skin. Even when an oil sheen may not be visible, dispersed and dissolved oil contaminants may exist in the water,” stated Dr. Chau. “Please contact your family physician or call 911 if you are experiencing adverse symptoms. Currently, we are asking residents to please refrain from participating in recreational activities on the coastline such as swimming, surfing, biking, walking, exercising, gathering, etc.”

According to the HCA’s Environmental Health Division, spilled oil can pose a skin contact concern and it contains volatile components that can evaporate in the air. Depending on their concentration, such air pollutants may travel by the wind and aerosols. Petroleum products contain toxic chemicals such as benzene and aromatic hydrocarbons. Prolong exposure with these chemicals may cause health issues.

Symptoms reported from excessive exposure to oil or dispersants commonly include the following:

- Skin, eye, nose and throat irritation
- headache
- dizziness
- upset stomach
- vomiting
- cough or shortness of breath

Inhalation of toxic oil vapors or other aerosolized oil compound particles from wind-blown waves can cause these side effects. The elderly, children, and folks with respiratory diseases such as asthma will be more susceptible to adverse side effects from inhaling the oil vapors. Please contact your family physician or call 911 should you experience these symptoms from contacting or inhaling the oil vapors.

The HCA, in coordination with local, state and federal authorities will continue to monitor and keep you informed. In addition to the immediate impact on air pollution, we advise against consuming seafood from personal fishing off the beaches.

For general inquiries regarding health-related questions regarding this oil spill, please call (714) 834-2000.

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