



**PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
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## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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March 6, 2018

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### **Environmental Health Services** *Rainy Season Advisory*

**(Santa Barbara, Calif.)** – Avoid ocean water contact during and at least three days following significant rainstorms according to the Public Health Department Environmental Health Services program. “Runoff from storms brings bacteria from creeks into the ocean,” stated Dr. Charity Dean, Health Officer. Additionally, the sediments from the January 9 debris flow contained high bacterial levels and are known to have created additional and prolonged elevated bacterial counts in affected ocean water.

Rainstorm runoff is untreated and is known to transport high levels of disease-causing organisms such as bacteria, viruses and protozoa from the watershed to the ocean. Such organisms can cause skin, respiratory and intestinal problems, especially in vulnerable people such as those with compromised immune systems, the very young and elderly.

Surfers and other ocean water enthusiasts are advised to avoid ocean water contact following significant storm events, especially in areas close to creeks, rivers, storm drains and other runoff outlets that empty into the ocean.

Sport harvesters should wait until at least 10 days after a significant rain to harvest shellfish. High bacterial levels, pesticide, herbicide and motor oil grease flushed into the ocean with the storm runoff may contaminate the shellfish beds. When raw or undercooked contaminated shell fish is eaten, serious illnesses such as gastroenteritis, septicemia, salmonellosis, and hepatitis may result. Adequate cooking of shellfish will destroy harmful bacteria, but may not be effective in killing viruses. In addition, cooking does not eliminate chemical and metal pollutants in the shellfish.

For additional information and the most recent ocean water quality data please visit [www.sbcphd.org](http://www.sbcphd.org).