



News Advisory

Highly toxic harmful algal bloom at Lake Elsinore triggers “Danger” advisory to avoid water contact

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Contact: Blair Robertson – [Public Information Officer](#)

Lake Elsinore – Testing in five distinct areas of Lake Elsinore indicates the presence of a harmful algal bloom with high levels of toxins that pose a significant health threat to humans and pets, prompting a “Danger” advisory urging visitors to avoid water contact of any kind and not to eat any fish or shellfish from the lake.

The State Water Resources Control Board, in conjunction with the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board and City of Lake Elsinore, urges the public to stay out of the water, including refraining from boating and paddle boarding, at Lake Elsinore in Riverside County. Signs have been posted with a recreational advisory of “[DANGER](#)” to alert visitors of the elevated risk. All visitors to Lake Elsinore are urged to follow posted guidance until further notice.

The City of Lake Elsinore has been testing regularly for HABs at Lake Elsinore, which is particularly vulnerable to HABs outbreaks due to its shallow waters, increasing temperatures, and its history of blooms in the summer months, as chronicled in its “[Lake Watch](#)” program. The bloom currently occurring in the lake appears suspended on the water’s surface (picture attached). Most recent sampling results indicate that the lake contains extremely elevated levels of toxins associated with cyanobacteria, a group of organisms that form harmful algal blooms and can produce potent toxins.

While a “Danger” advisory is triggered at 20 micrograms per liter of microcystins, the latest results from testing in Lake Elsinore show the presence of up to 36,750 micrograms per liter.

A “DANGER” advisory means:

- Stay out of the water, including watercraft.
- Do not let pets and other animals drink or go into the water or go near the scum.
- Stay away from scum, and cloudy or discolored water.
- Do not eat fish or shellfish from this water.
- Do not use this water for drinking or cooking. Boiling or filtering will not make the water safe.

HABs are associated with health risks, as they produce dermatotoxins that can cause itchy skin and rashes, as well as gastrointestinal distress, headaches, agitation and



weakness, or even abnormal breathing if HAB material is swallowed while swimming. Dogs and children are most susceptible to exposure because of their smaller body size, increased potential to swallow water while swimming, and tendency to stay in the water longer. Anyone who suspects exposure to HABs should wash themselves, their children and/or dog immediately.

Due to the size and toxicity of this bloom along with the summer heat and absence of rainfall this time of year, the bloom may proliferate and alter its potential to produce toxins. Bloom conditions can change rapidly, as wind and waves move or concentrate the bloom into different regions of the lake. In some areas, the bloom may concentrate and form a film or scum on the water surface. The color of the water may also appear discolored as bright or dark green and brown.

The City of Lake Elsinore has posted advisory signs to notify visitors of the bloom. The city and the Water Boards will provide regular updates to inform the community when postings are removed on the [California HAB Reports Web Map](#) and the [Lake Watch](#) webpage.

The Water Boards recommend that people practice [healthy water habits](#) while enjoying the outdoors this summer at California's lakes, rivers and streams:

- Check the [California HAB Reports Web Map](#) to see if HABs have been reported in your area.
- Heed all instructions on posted advisories if present.
- Avoid algae and scum in the water and on the shore.
- If you think a harmful algal bloom or toxic algal mats are present, do not let pets and other animals go into or drink the water or eat scum/algal mats on the shore.
- Don't drink the water or use it for cooking.
- Wash yourself, your family and your pets with clean water after water play.
- If you catch fish, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap water or bottled water before cooking.
- Avoid eating shellfish if you think a harmful algal bloom is present.

Obtain medical treatment immediately if you think that you, your pet, or livestock has gotten sick after going in the water. Be sure to alert the medical professional to the possible contact with cyanobacteria. Also, make sure to contact the local county public health department.

To report a bloom, do one of the following:

- Fill out the Bloom Report form on [the HABs Portal](#):
- Email: CyanoHAB.reports@waterboards.ca.gov
- **Call the HABs hotline: 1-844-729-6466 (toll free)**
- Contact your County Public Health Office

For more information about HABs, please visit:

- [California Harmful Algal Blooms Portal](https://www.californiaharmfulalgalblooms.com/)
- <https://www.lake-elsinore.org/615/Lake-Watch>

City of Lake Elsinnore

UPDATED 6/21/24

LAKE WATCH

	1	2	3	4	5
Sample Date	Launch Pointe	Elm Grove Beach	Elsinnore West Marina	Center of Lake	Perret Park
10/16/23	1.93	1.90	1.97	1.48	1.80
10/25/23	1.47	1.90	1.15	0.85	1.12
11/8/23	0.97	0.91	1.05	0.85	1.12
11/28/23	1.00	1.11	0.76	0.93	1.08
12/12/23	0.65	0.95	0.79	0.71	0.89
1/10/24	0.53	0.70	0.56	0.56	0.57
1/29/24	0.56	2.99	0.58	0.50	0.89
2/14/24	0.36	0.53	0.50	0.35	0.34
2/27/24	0.43	0.33	0.34	0.39	0.38
3/13/24	0.32	0.36	0.30	ND	0.36
3/27/24	0.37	0.31	0.35	ND	0.32
4/10/24	0.38	0.35	0.36	ND	0.33
4/24/24	ND	ND	1.29	ND	0.98
5/8/24	0.45	4.64	0.64	0.64	15.03
5/24/24	3.0	7.9	19.0	2.0	2.3
6/12/24	2.65	1.88	397.50	7.9	2.02

ND= Non-detectable (<0.30 ug/L)

No Advisory (0.79 ppb or lower)
Caution Advisory (0.80 ppb to 5.99 ppb)
Warning Advisory (6 ppb to 19.99 ppb)
Danger Advisory (20 ppb or higher)

Lake Water Testing for Harmful Algae

- The City of Lake Elsinnore contracts with WSP Environment & Infrastructure for testing of microcystin, the most prevalent form of harmful algae cyanotoxin in Lake Elsinnore.
- WSP scientists collect, prepare, and ship samples via overnight delivery to Greenwater Lab in Florida. Samples are collected at three or more sites around the lake. Results are typically received within 3-5 business days and are shared with the California State HAB Monitoring Program.
- Testing is conducted weekly when a Danger Advisory is in effect and bi-weekly when a Warning or Caution Advisory is in effect. HABs can be highly mobile in a waterbody, so always follow [healthy water habits](#).
- Microcystin levels are measured in ng/L, or parts per billion (ppb). Results from testing events conducted during the current algae bloom are displayed on the map and in the table with thresholds and advisory protocols displayed above. Lakewide advisory is based on the highest level of all sampling locations.
- Two consecutive results with reduced levels of toxins are required to lower an advisory. A single test result with increased levels of toxins will raise the advisory level.

Lake Level (Elevation in Feet)

Reference Levels	Current
Min. Preferred Operating Level:	1240'
Outflow Channel Level:	1255'
Back Basin Overflow:	1262'
Levee Elevation:	1265'

Current	1248.80
3 Months Ago	1248.6'
6 Months Ago	1242.1'
1 Year Ago	1243.7'
20 year High	1259' (Mar 1995)
20 year Low	1233' (Aug 2016)

DANGER

Toxins from algae in this water can harm people and kill animals



Stay out of the water until further notice. Do not touch scum in the water or on shore.



Do not let pets or other animals drink or go into the water or go near the scum.



Do not eat fish or shellfish from this water.



Do not use this water for drinking or cooking. Boiling or filtering will not make the water safe.

For people, the toxins can cause:

- Skin rashes, eye irritation
- Diarrhea, vomiting

For animals, the toxins can cause:

- Diarrhea, vomiting
- Convulsions and death

Call your doctor or veterinarian if you or your pet get sick after going in the water.

For more information on harmful algae, go to <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/index.html>

For local information, contact: