

Subject: City Beach Temporarily Closing Today

CITY BEACH AT CASCO POINT BEACH CLOSING TODAY

Hennepin County collected water samples from Casco Point Beach in Orono, with samples taken from the left, center, and right areas of the beach water. According to the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended water quality standards, test results showed that the beach's water may pose a health concern to individuals coming into contact with the water at this time.

Hennepin County has recommended that the City of Orono close the beach due to the current levels of bacterial contamination; therefore, the beach will be closed today until further notice. Hennepin County will be re-sampling the beach and will provide test results to City staff as soon as possible. The beach will remain closed until water sample results are within acceptable limits.

Please read and take note of the "FAQ's" below for more detailed information. Should you have any additional questions, please contact Don at 952.249.4670; or Hennepin County Public Health at 612.543.5200.

ALSO, please note that the [Hennepin County Public Health Department maintains a web page discussing beach water quality monitoring](#) (text is a link). This site also includes a list of County monitored beaches in our surrounding area and their current status.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the specific affected area?

The closure is specifically associated with the shallow water / beach area. General recreational use (i.e. waterskiing, boating) in the deeper water is allowed, BUT lake users should not ingest any lake water and should wash or shower after getting out of the water. Lake users should also be sure to wash their hands after getting out of the water prior to eating. This is recommended not just for lakes with beach closures - but as a smart practice at all times.

What is the cause of the elevated bacterial level?

Not a pretty answer, but here it is - fecal contamination from humans and animals. Agricultural runoff from horse or other animal farms is also a contributing factor. Nearly all water-borne illnesses are caused by organisms in untreated human and other animal waste introduced to the water directly or via rainstorm runoff. High water temperatures, low water levels, and bathing practices can also be factors in bacterial growth.

How long will the beach be closed?

Hennepin County will be re-sampling our beach water frequently and will continue to provide test results as soon as they become available. The beach will remain closed until water sampling test results are within acceptable limits.

Should I be watching for symptoms if I used the beach just before the closure?

To measure the risk of contracting gastrointestinal illnesses from recreational exposure to beach water, samples are collected and analyzed for Escherichia coli bacteria, a primary indicator organism. The bacteria found in the water sampling is not disease causing itself; but according to EPA standards elevated E. coli bacteria levels are an indicator that there could be the potential for other disease causing bacteria or parasites to be present. Bacteria and viruses in bodies of water can cause some ear and eye infections, stomach aches, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms. To report any water related illnesses, please contact Hennepin County Public Health at 612.543.5200.