

For Immediate Release*news release*

From The Texas Department of Health
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Contaminated Fish Found in Fort Worth Lakes

Dr. David Smith, Texas Commissioner of Health, today announced that the Texas Department of Health (TDH) is issuing a ban on the possession of fish taken from two urban lakes in the Fort Worth area. This action is the result of TDH laboratory findings of unacceptably high levels of toxic organic compounds in fish from Como Lake and Fosdic Lake in the Oakland Park area of Fort Worth.

TDH laboratory test results indicated that fish samples from these lakes contained elevated levels of several organic compounds, including chlordane, PCBs, DDE and dieldrin.

"These compounds can be carcinogenic and can have detrimental effects on the nervous system, liver and other organs. I urge everyone to comply with the ban and strongly advise recreational fishermen and others not to eat fish caught in Como or Fosdic lakes," said Dr. Smith.

TDH assistance was requested by the Fort Worth Department of Environmental Management which last year found elevated levels of the toxins in fish taken from Como Lake and was concerned that similar conditions might exist in other urban lakes in the Fort Worth area. TDH is coordinating its activities with the Fort Worth Department of Environmental Management and the Fort Worth-Tarrant County Health Department.

In response to the request from the City of Fort Worth, TDH on Monday also collected fish samples from three additional Fort Worth area lakes--French Lake, Cement Creek Reservoir and Echo Lake. Those samples are being sent to the TDH laboratory in Austin for analysis. The laboratory results will be made public as soon as TDH completes the sample analyses and health risk assessments.

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The chemicals found in the fish taken from Como and Fosdic lakes are used for various pest control and industrial purposes and were probably carried into the lakes from local urban areas by rainfall runoff. Accumulation of the compounds in fish living in the lakes can reach levels that pose risks to people who eat the fish.

"This is a growing problem in urban areas—where domestic and industrial chemicals end up in lakes where people like to fish. We recognize that this problem is not confined to urban lakes in Fort Worth," Dr. Smith said.

TDH is planning a statewide fish sampling program for urban lakes in an attempt to determine the extent of the problem.

Fish consumption advisories issued by TDH remain in effect for several other bodies of water in Texas including the Donna Reservoir and canal system in Hidalgo County, Town Lake in Austin, the Trinity River in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Clear Creek near Friendswood in the Houston area and Caddo Lake in northeast Texas.

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(For more information, contact Richard Thompson, Seafood Safety Division, at 512-719-0215 or Margaret Wilson, Public Information Office, at 512-458-7400.)