



## Public Health Brief

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### Ice Fishing and Cyanotoxins (Blue-Green Algae)

Most of you are not thinking about fishing yet, but some are interested in ice fishing. We have received questions about the safety of eating fish due to last summer's harmful algae blooms in several lakes.

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are the rapid growth of algae that can cause harm to animals, people, or the local ecology. A **HAB** can look like foam, scum, or mats on the surface of water and can be different colors. HABs can produce toxins that have caused a variety of illnesses in people and animals. The toxins are eaten by the fish and are concentrated mainly in the liver. The fish are not affected, but dogs who drink the water may become sick and die. People can experience eye irritation, skin rash, mouth ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea, and cold or flu-like symptoms, with impacts to the liver. Children are more susceptible than adults.

There is very little information on the toxin levels in fish over the cold winter months after accumulation during the summer. We know that there were toxin levels above the "Danger" level in Alpine County this past season. What we don't know is what is left in the tissue of fish now during the cold winter months, or what a safe waiting period would be.

Therefore, here are our general recommendations for those of you catching fish this winter and spring:

- After cleaning the fish, rinse thoroughly with clean cold water
- Do not eat the viscera, the organs
- Consume the filet only
- Or, better yet, catch and release. Dream about how big the fish will be when you catch it again this summer!



**Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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