P R E S S R E L E A S E

November 30, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stormwater Runoff Advisory

The Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services Division issued a stormwater runoff advisory today, in response to rain received and anticipation of additional upcoming rains. The advisory reminds residents that runoff from stormwater frequently contains bacterial and other contaminants. Contact with stormwater may increase the risk for certain types of illnesses such as rashes, fever, chills, ear infections, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Unlike the municipal sewer system, water carried by the storm drain system is not treated. Studies reflect that untreated stormwater may increase a number of health conditions. To minimize potential health risks, it is recommended that people do not swim, play or surf in the ocean and creeks for at least three days following a stormwater runoff event. If people do choose to swim during the rain or immediately following the rain, they should avoid areas near the outfall from drainpipes and creeks that enter the ocean. Beachgoers should also avoid discolored water, as this may indicate high pollutant levels. In addition, they should shower using soap and water as soon as possible after contact.

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 shellfish 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.

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