



News Release

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Contact: [DOH Communications](#)

Unsafe levels of Paralytic Shellfish Poison detected in Orcas Island shellfish

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is urging people to avoid eating oysters and clams harvested from Buck Bay on Orcas Island in San Juan County on July 26-27, following the detection of high levels of [Paralytic Shellfish Poison](#) (PSP) in the shellfish. The shellfish were sold directly to consumers from Buck Bay Shellfish Farm retail market and restaurant on the island.

DOH detected the PSP through biotoxin monitoring – the shellfish tested had PSP levels nearly 4 times the allowable level for harvest. As of July 27, there have been no reports of illness associated with the recalled shellfish. Buck Bay Growing Area is closed until further notice.

Paralytic Shellfish Poison

PSP is a naturally occurring marine biotoxin that is produced by some species of microscopic algae. Shellfish eat these algae and can retain the toxin. The toxin is not destroyed by cooking or freezing.

PSP symptoms can occur within minutes to a few hours of consuming contaminated shellfish. Death from PSP has occurred in less than 30 minutes. Symptoms can include:

- Tingling and numbness of the lips, tongue, fingers, and toes.
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- Loss of coordination, difficulty speaking and swallowing, and total muscular paralysis with respiratory arrest (in severe cases).

If you have mild symptoms, call your health care provider right away. If symptoms are severe, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately.

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Current biotoxin closures are listed on DOH's [Shellfish Safety Map](#). For a recorded list of areas closed for biotoxins, call the biotoxin/red tide hotline at 1-800-562-5632.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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