

Stretch of Kaneohe Bay contaminated by PCBs

Residents are warned not to eat fish or shellfish from waters along a stretch of Kaneohe Bay near Yacht Club Street.

Signs posted by the state Department of Health also warn that swimming could be a health risk in that part of the bay.

Testing of sediments in a Kaneohe Bay inlet showed low levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the DOH said.

They were 1.9 parts per million above the 1 part per million federal action level for PCBs found in soil.

The department closed the area near Yacht Club Street to investigate the extent of the problem.

Testing of fish and seaweed samples and sediments is continuing.

Health officials are looking into possible sources of the contamination but believe the PCBs flowed into the ocean through a storm drain near a leaking PCB transformer that had been behind a nearby Safeway Supermarket.

Safeway notified the DOH after learning of the leak and removed the transformer. It hired consultants to clean up the contaminated site and sample other areas to determine the extent of the contamination.

The Environmental Protection Agency considers PCBs to be probable human carcinogens.

However, it may take years of regularly eating contaminated fish and shellfish to build up levels of chemicals of health concern, the DOH said.

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