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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

2013FOR0031-000569  
March 21, 2013

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
Vancouver Island Health Authority  
Toquaht Marina and Campground Ltd.

### **Toquaht Bay marina, campground and boat launch closed**

VICTORIA – The Toquaht Bay marina, campground and boat launch are closed until further notice for environmental testing. In the interim, the public can use the public boat launch in Ucluelet.

Recent testing in the area found arsenic, selenium and cobalt at levels that exceed the commercial and park lands standards laid out in B.C.'s Contaminated Sites Regulation.

The Province and the Toquaht Marina and Campground Ltd., with support from the Vancouver Island Health Authority medical health officer, are temporarily closing the marina, campground, boat launch and road access to the site until the Province has conducted further studies, the potential risks to human health are better understood, and the Vancouver Island Health Authority medical health officer deems that the area is safe to re-open.

Additional study is expected to take at least eight weeks, after which the extent of required remediation will be known.

At this time, the contaminant that is most concerning to health officials is arsenic. Arsenic is found in many minerals and can be poisonous in small doses or even fatal to humans if contaminated soil is consumed in larger amounts. This can occur unintentionally, especially by small children playing on the ground or eating dirt.

Symptoms of acute exposure to arsenic include stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea and impaired nerve function, which may result in a "pins and needles" sensation in hands and feet. If you or your children have been in the area very recently and you notice symptoms of illness, you should consult your doctor.

Health officials recommend that the consumption of shellfish or fish from the campground's foreshore be avoided until further testing is conducted. Any shellfish or fish products from this specific site that may be in your freezer should be discarded and not consumed.

The former forest recreation site at Toquaht Bay was developed for public recreation after the closure of the Brynnor Mine in the late 1960s. The recreation site was Crown land until it was transferred to the Toquaht Nation as part of the Maa-nulth Treaty, which came into effect on April 1, 2011. In the treaty, the Province agreed to undertake environmental inspections and, if necessary, remediate any contamination at the site to identified land-use standards if and when the Toquaht Nation decided to further develop the site. The road leading to the boat launch, and the launch itself, remain Crown land.

**Learn More:**

Information updates will be available at: [www.toquahtbay.com/closure.html](http://www.toquahtbay.com/closure.html)  
For additional health information, visit - [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) - or call 8-1-1.

Frequently Asked Questions on human health/arsenic follows.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Human health concerns related to arsenic at Toquaht Marina and Campground Ltd.**

#### **What metals were found that could be of concern to human health?**

- Elevated levels of arsenic, cobalt and selenium were found at the site. While all of these metals can pose some risk to human health, in this instance the metal of most concern from a human health perspective is arsenic.

#### **What is arsenic, and what risks can it pose to human health?**

- It's too early to determine the extent of the human health risk at the site. However, out of an abundance of caution, the campground, marina and boat launch are being closed until a human health risk assessment can be completed.
- Arsenic is found naturally in the rocks of the earth's crust and occurs in many minerals. It can get into drinking water or soil from natural deposits, run-off from agriculture, and mining and industrial processes. It can be extremely poisonous to humans when consumed either in drinking water or from contaminated soil. In this case, the higher concentrations of arsenic are from tailings from historic mining that occurred from the Brynnor Mine in the 1960s.
- One can get sick from consuming soil contaminated with arsenic. While further testing is needed to clarify exactly what exposure level poses a risk, one would likely need to ingest substantial amounts to notice any adverse effects.
- Children may be at greater risk of arsenic poisoning or illness associated with exposure to arsenic. Children need to ingest a much smaller amount to notice adverse effects. Young children are considered to be more likely to put soil in their mouths.
- If you or your children have been in the area very recently and you notice symptoms of illness, you should consult your doctor.

#### **What symptoms would I have if I had arsenic poisoning?**

- In small doses, arsenic can cause acute effects such as diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and impaired nerve function, which may result in "pins and needles" sensation in hands and feet. If consumed in larger amounts, arsenic can be fatal.
- Longer-term exposure to arsenic can also cause skin changes, which may include darkening, and wart-like or corn-like growths. These are mostly found on the palms of the hands or bottoms of the feet.
- Long-term (years to decades) exposure to low amounts of arsenic can increase one's risk of developing certain cancers.

**I have been going there every year for 30 years. Will I get sick?**

- It is too early to determine the human health risk at the site. Any potential health impacts will depend on the duration, frequency and type of exposure to a contaminant.
- Ongoing risk assessment activities will include recommendations on assessing risk to human health. For more information visit the BC Health File regarding arsenic at:  
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile49c.stm>

**Are there human health risks associated with drinking water at the campground?**

- There is no drinking water available at the Toquaht Marina and Campground Ltd. All water sources are clearly marked as “not approved for human consumption.”

**Are there human health risks associated with pitching a tent at the site?**

- It's too early to determine the extent of the human health risk at the site. Any potential health impacts will depend on the duration, frequency and type of exposure to a contaminant.
- One cannot generally get sick just from pitching a tent on soil contaminated with arsenic. Arsenic is not readily absorbed through the skin.

**Are there human health risks associated with swimming in the water at this campground?**

- Arsenic in the foreshore area was identified as exceeding applicable standards. We do not recommend swimming in the water until further tests are conducted.

**Are there human health risks associated with eating shellfish or fish from the campground's foreshore?**

- Arsenic and cobalt were identified as exceeding standards for marine aquatic life. It's too early to understand the extent of the human health risk at the site. We are recommending that people not consume shellfish or other fish from the campground's foreshore until further tests are conducted. If you have frozen shellfish or fish products from this specific site in your freezer, discard it and do not consume.

For additional health information, visit - [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) - or call 8-1-1.

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