



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Vermont Drinking Water Systems Now Sampling for Blue-Green Algae Toxins



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**BURLINGTON** –All 22 of the drinking water systems on Lake Champlain began sampling this week as part of a new program to monitor public drinking water supplies for blue-green algae toxins.

Some blue-green algae blooms produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals. Testing is the only way to know if an algae toxin is present in drinking water. This new 12-week monitoring program will bolster the state's current efforts to visually monitor for blue-green algae blooms and protect the public from potential toxins in drinking water.

Lake Champlain is the drinking water source for about 150,000 Vermonters. Since the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not require testing for blue-green algae toxins, participation in collecting samples is voluntary.

Thirty public drinking water system operators were trained this spring on visual bloom identification and toxin detection response. Water system operators are submitting samples to the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory for toxin analyses.

“If there is detection above the health advisory of a blue-green algae toxin in the sample, the drinking water system will advise its customers to not drink the water until the toxin is no longer detected above the health advisory,” said the Health Department's State Toxicologist Sarah Vose. Treatment capabilities to remove the toxin may involve filtration or oxidation.

Ellen Parr Doering, assistant division director at the Department of Environmental Conservation said: “We've done a lot of work with the drinking water system operators both in terms of training, and how the public and state would be notified if blue-green algae toxins are found in any drinking water samples.”

Brian Bishop, chief operator for the Swanton Village Treatment Facility, said algae toxin detection in a finished drinking water sample would be rare. Jim Fay, general manager of the Champlain Water District—the state's largest system—said historical test results for blue-green algae toxins have shown no results above the minimum detectable levels.

Each year the Vermont Department of Health, working in partnership with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and the Lake Champlain Committee, monitor 140 recreational locations around the state. Shoreline monitoring this year began on June 15.

The state's [interactive lake status map](http://healthvermont.gov/enviro/bg_algae/weekly_status.aspx), developed with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Environmental Public Health Tracking Program](#) and Climate-Ready States and Cities Initiative, is available on the Health Department's website at: [http://healthvermont.gov/enviro/bg\\_algae/weekly\\_status.aspx](http://healthvermont.gov/enviro/bg_algae/weekly_status.aspx).

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