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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oil Spill Precautions

While there are no indications of any health risks to Floridians due to the Deepwater Horizon incident yet, the Pinellas County Health Department is urging residents and visitors to take precautions if they come in contact with residue from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Touching even a small amount of oil isn't recommended, but it will not be harmful. Wash with soap and water to clean off the oil.

Impacts to Florida's coastline could include tarballs – fragments or lumps of oil weathered to a semi-solid or solid consistency. Tarballs feel sticky, and are difficult to remove from contaminated surfaces. Impacts could also come in the form of an oil sheen or tar mat – a sheet of oil that is thicker than a sheen. If you see tarballs or other evidence of oil on Florida's coastline, leave the area and call (866) 448-5816.

To avoid negative health impacts from an oiled shoreline:

- Avoid entering areas where you see or smell oil.
- Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil-contaminated water and sediments.
- Don't swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill.
- If traveling through oily areas by boat, take precautions when hoisting the boat anchor. Avoid traveling through oil slicks and sheens.
- Don't fish in spill-affected waters.
- Don't harvest or eat dead fish, fish with oily residue or fish that have a petroleum odor.
- Young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and those with underlying respiratory conditions should stay away from oiled shores.
- Prevent pets from entering oil-contaminated areas.

For information, call the Oil Spill Info Line, (888) 337-3569 or go to www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com.

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