Idaho's Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Bloom Risk Level Summary

In 2026, Idaho implemented a color-coded, tiered risk communication system for cyanobacteria harmful algal blooms (cyanoHABs). **Health Advisories** are still issued by Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) or public health districts (PHD) through press releases on the DHW news page, or PHD website. To provide timely public information while toxin test results are pending, Idaho's response framework includes two additional risk levels—**Health Watch** and **Health Alert**—which appear on the DHW Idaho Recreational Water Health Advisories Map and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality CyanoHAB Risk Data Table.

When received, new information is updated on the map and table, but not all waterbodies can be monitored regularly and conditions can change quickly. Look for signs of cyanoHABs, and when in doubt, stay out! Keep pets and other animals out, too!

Watch – Indicates evidence of a cyanoHAB. This risk level is based on field observations, photographic evidence, and/or satellite data. Toxin concentration and toxin-producing organism concentration may not have been measured.



Alert – Indicates high level risk to the health of pets and livestock, and can cause illness in humans, especially if exposure is prolonged or continual. This risk level is based on field testing, laboratory testing, or reported human or animal illness.



Health Advisory – Indicates a high level of confirmed risk to humans from cyanoHABs. Toxins or toxin-producing organisms have exceeded threshold levels at which adverse health effects are expected. Thresholds are set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and/or DHW. This risk level is based on laboratory testing or verified human illness. When laboratory testing is unavailable, the criteria for issuing a health advisory will be lowered to ensure the public is informed and can make decisions based on information provided in the advisory.



For more information on these changes and how we respond to cyanoHABs, refer to the **Idaho Cyanobacteria Recreational Waters Response Plan**.