

Water warning in Lee expanded

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Health inspectors found what could be toxic algae in the Imperial River on Friday morning, prompting a new warning to stay out of all fresh bodies of water.

The Lee County Health Department warned residents earlier this month to avoid the Caloosahatchee River because of toxic algae blooms there.

Someone contacted the health department on Friday morning and complained about breathing problems along the Imperial River, which could be caused by algae exposure, said spokeswoman Diane Holm.

Friday's expanded warning includes fresh waterways, including rivers, canals, lakes and man-made lakes. Brackish water is also included.

The drought creates ideal conditions for algae blooms in most bodies of water except salt.

Exposure to algae can cause serious health problems, such as stomach issues, vomiting, nausea, and skin irritation.

People should avoid swimming or accidentally drinking the water, eating fish from it or allowing pets or livestock to drink from it.

Health inspectors took samples of the algae it found in Lee County and is in the process of testing it.

By Dan Cassuto