

SARGASSUM SEAWEED INFO

COURTESY OF CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

Over the past few weeks, you may have noticed a heavier influx of brownish sargassum (seaweed) along our shoreline. Prior to operating heavy machinery, a team surveys for sea turtle nests each morning. Once the survey is complete, beach operations crews proceed to clean the beach until sunset, regardless of tidal conditions.

#1



WHY CAN'T SARGASSUM BE REMOVED FROM THE WATER BEFORE IT REACHES THE SHORELINE?

State and federal environmental regulations prohibit the removal of seaweed from the water prior to its landing on the shore.

#2

IS IT HARMFUL TO BEACHGOERS?

According to the Florida Health Department, as sargassum decomposes, it gives off a substance called hydrogen sulfide. Hydrogen sulfide has a very unpleasant odor, like rotten eggs. Although the seaweed itself cannot harm people, tiny sea creatures that live in sargassum can cause skin rashes and blisters. Hydrogen sulfide can also irritate the eyes, nose and throat. If you have asthma or other breathing illnesses, you'll be more sensitive to these symptoms. However, the levels of hydrogen sulfide in an area like the beach, with large amounts of airflow, are not expected to harm health.

#3

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SARGASSUM?

Sargassum provides crucial habitat for many marine species, including endangered sea turtles, which, upon hatching on our beaches, make their way out to the sargassum to spend their juvenile years feeding and growing amongst the seaweed mats. It is also an important element in shoreline stability. It also provides nutrients to the shoreline and can replenish areas that suffer beach erosion due to hurricanes and storms, thereby helping to keep our shorelines resilient.



#4

WILL SARGASSUM EVER GO AWAY?

Although the abundance of seaweed conditions are expected to improve around October or November, the great Atlantic sargassum belt may be the "new norm," according to a recent report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This means Sargassum may become a regular sight on South Florida beaches during "Sargassum Season" (March through October).