

Responding to Fish Kills

MDEQ biologists from the agency's [Laboratory and Regional Offices](#) investigate numerous fish kills throughout the state each year. While many of these are due to natural causes such as low dissolved oxygen in the water or algal blooms, other kills are caused by human activities such as chemical spills, release of raw sewage, agricultural accidents, and misuse of pesticides. MDEQ's biologists work to determine the cause of the kill, the species affected, and the extent (i.e. surface acres of a waterbody or miles of stream) of the kill.



The assistance of the public in reporting fish kills and providing thorough information can make a big impact on the response time and the investigation. The sooner trained staff can be on the scene of a fish kill, the better the chance of being able to determine the cause of the kill. In fact, it is best if a biologist is able to observe the behavior of the dying fish and collect live fish for chemical analysis if it is suspected that the kill was caused by human activity. As soon as a fish dies

and begins to decompose, the chemical is released from the fish tissue back into the environment.

MDEQ staff are on call seven days a week to respond to fish kills. Fish kills can be reported to the MDEQ Lab in Pearl (601-961-5701) or any of the Regional Offices (Oxford 662-234-3733; Pearl 601-961-5656; Biloxi 228-432-1056). A caller should provide the following information if possible: the exact location; the date and time the kill was observed; if fish are still dying; the color of the water; any recent rainfall; and, most importantly, the behavior of any live fish observed (i.e. gulping for air at the waters surface).