



## news release

From The Texas Department of Health  
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### Selenium Taints Fish at Three Northeast Texas Lakes

Dr. David R. Smith, Texas Commissioner of Health, today issued an advisory that fish from three power plant lakes in Northeast Texas contain elevated levels of selenium.

Selenium is generated by the burning of lignite coal at the three power plants. Although it is an essential trace element in the human diet, selenium is toxic at high levels. Long-term ingestion of selenium at levels only 5-6 times higher than the requirement for good nutrition may cause symptoms of toxicity in sensitive individuals.

Human symptoms of selenium toxicity can include hair and nail brittleness and loss, skin inflammation or blisters, vomiting, fatigue and a variety of neurologic abnormalities. Excessive selenium is hazardous to developing fetuses.

The contaminated waters are: all of Martin Creek Reservoir (Rusk and Panola Counties); all of Brandy Branch Reservoir (Harrison County); and Welsh Reservoir (Titus County). All fish species tested have shown elevated selenium levels.

The Texas Department of Health recommends the following guidelines for people wishing to consume fish caught in any of the three power plant lakes:

- \* Adults should eat no more than eight ounces of fish per week;
- \* Children 7 or older should eat no more than one four-ounce serving per week;
- \* Children younger than 7, pregnant women or women who may soon become pregnant should not eat any fish from the three reservoirs; and
- \* Anyone who eats fish from these lakes should not take dietary supplements containing more than 50 micrograms of selenium per day.

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(For more information, contact Kirk Wiles, Classification Branch Chief, Shellfish Sanitation Control Division, at 512/458-7510, or Margaret Wilson, Public Information Director, Public Health Promotion Division, at 512/458-7405.)