



News from the Office of
ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

**Health Commissioner
Dr. Gale Burstein**

June 21, 2012

CONTACT: Peter Anderson / Peter.Anderson@erie.gov
Phone: (716)858-8500 / Mobile: (716) 270-7842

BURSTEIN OUTLINES BEACH PROGRAM TO ENSURE WATER QUALITY

Arrival of Summer Means Attention to Oversight, Beach Water Quality Monitoring

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein outlined the Erie County Department of Health (“ECDOH”) Beach Program. ECDOH maintains responsibility and authority to protect the health of beach bathers by assuring that public beaches are open only when water conditions meet the standards of the New York State Public Health Code. There are ten regulated beaches along the 20 miles of Erie County Lake Erie shoreline, southwest, from Buffalo to the County boundary.

“The health of beach bathers is my primary concern,” **said Burstein.** “We must ensure that our water is free of bacterial contamination to prevent recreational water illnesses (RWI). In order to preserve the health of swimmers, we are collaborating with the beaches’ owners and operators to ensure they are in compliance with all relevant State and local Health Codes.”

The ECDOH has oversight responsibility and regulatory authority for eight beaches, including five public beaches, two children’s camps and one campground; ECDOH issues annual permits to the owner/operators of these beaches and assures compliance with all relevant State and local Health Codes. The remaining two beaches are managed by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historical Preservation (“NYSOPRHP”), with which there is close cooperation.

Daily beach water quality will be monitored for the presence of bacterial contamination from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The Department of Health has instituted sanitary surveys of the eight public and camp beaches, as well as tributaries (creeks and streams) to identify sources of human and animal fecal contamination. Additionally, the development and maintenance of a weather station network will provide meteorological data that is used to assess impacts of weather on water quality conditions.

The most common RWI is diarrhea caused by swallowing water that has been contaminated with feces containing germs that cause diarrhea. However, RWIs can cause a variety of infections, including skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic and wound infections.

- For more information on ECDOH's Beach Program, including weather station information, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=node/101>
- For more information on health risks associated with swimming in polluted water, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/oceans/index.html>

#