

# Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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## **OEHHA Issues Fish Advisory for Donner Lake**

January 27, 2011  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) today released a health advisory and safe eating guidelines for fish caught in Donner Lake. OEHHA's advisory and guidelines provide recommendations for those who regularly eat fish caught in Donner Lake and in the creeks that flow into and away from it. The documents offer advice regarding fish portion size and tips to include fish in a healthy diet.

“Our scientific sampling shows that families can safely eat Donner Lake's most popular sport fish at least once a week and as many as seven times a week, depending on the kind of fish,” said OEHHA Director Dr. Joan Denton. “Following OEHHA's advisory and guidelines maximizes the health benefits of eating wild-caught fish, while minimizing the health risks associated with exposure to contaminants in these fish.”

Donner Lake is located in Nevada County, about 11 miles northwest of Lake Tahoe. Fish samples caught in the lake contained detectable levels of mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and a few other chemicals. Almost all fish contain some mercury, almost always in the form of methylmercury.

OEHHA recommends that anglers consume no more than one (6-ounce) serving of cooked Donner Lake brown trout or lake trout per week, or up to two such servings per week of kokanee. For rainbow trout, children 1 to 17 years and women 18 to 45 years old should limit their consumption to four servings a week; men and women over the age of 45 may eat Donner Lake rainbow trout up to seven times a week.

The age and gender differences for consumption advice reflect the unique sensitivity of children and women of childbearing age to methylmercury, which can cause health problems if allowed to build up in the body. Exposure to high amounts of methylmercury can affect the nervous system in children and harm learning ability, language skills and memory.

PCBs are common contaminants known to build up in fish. PCBs have been found to cause cancer in animals and also cause health problems in young children and adults.

**California Environmental Protection Agency**

*The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption.*

To serve fish to your family in the healthiest way possible and to minimize your exposure to chemical contamination, the guidelines recommend taking the following steps:

- Consume the correct serving size: OEHHA's recommended serving is an amount about the same as the size and thickness of your hand.
- Children should eat smaller servings than adults.
- Skin the fish and trim all visible fat.
- Eat only the fillet portion of the fish you catch.
- Thoroughly cook fish before eating, preferably using a method that allows the juices to drain away.

OEHHA is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency. The Donner Lake safe eating guidelines, a fact sheet and the 19-page Fish Advisory may be viewed at <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html>