

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

April 4 - 10, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On April 5, 2024, there was news of cadmium-containing waste being stored at a company in Muang District, Samut Sakhon Province, and at a company in Ban Bueng District, Chonburi Province. Authorities have announced a moratorium on people residing or conducting activities in the affected areas for a period of 90 days. The Ministry of Public Health has dispatched teams to the area to monitor potential impacts and conduct random toxic substance monitoring among the population in the affected areas. They have prepared personnel, medical supplies, antidotes, and provided basic self-protection knowledge to the public. Additionally, there will be health screenings conducted every 3 to 6 months going forward.
- Based on the dengue report in South America, there has been a severe outbreak in the first three months of 2024. The number of cases has tripled compared to the same period in 2023, with approximately 3.5 million reported cases and around 1,000 fatalities. Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina account for 98% of these cases. Since the beginning of this year, Argentina has reported 163,419 cases and currently, there is a shortage of mosquito repellent in the country. Efforts are being made urgently to address this issue.
- On April 6, 2024, Bluedot Event Alerts reported a case of Avian Influenza A (H9Nx) in Vietnam, confirmed by testing conducted at the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City. This marks the first known human-to-human transmission of the virus in Vietnam. Previously, cases of H9N2 infection had been reported in Cambodia and the People's Republic of China. This strain of avian influenza has been found to circulate among birds in Asia. While infections in humans typically present with mild symptoms, it is important to closely monitor this situation as the Avian Influenza A (H9N2) virus has the potential to undergo genetic reassortment with other influenza viruses, which may lead to the emergence of novel strains.

SULFURIC ACID ALERT

On April 5, 2024, the National Water Resources Office declared a warning to monitor the water quality in the Mekong River. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) reported a chemical truck accident causing 30 tons of sulfuric acid to spill into the Khaan River near Luang Prabang District on April 3. It is expected that the chemical will flow down to the Mekong River by April 5, then reach Thailand around the Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, around April 8 - 10. Provinces bordering the Mekong River, including Loei, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen, and Ubon Ratchathani, have been advised to closely monitor the water quality in the Mekong River.

According to the information from the Department of Science Service, Ministry of Science and Technology, sulfuric acid is classified as a Type 3 substance under the Hazardous Substance Act, 1992. It is generally a clear liquid, colorless, odorless, viscous, and readily soluble in water. It is used in various chemical industries, such as fertilizer production, petroleum chemical products, mineral production, chemical synthesis, and wastewater treatment. It has a corrosive property on almost all types of materials. Direct contact with the body, whether in the form of liquid, vapor, or smoke, affects the contacted body parts. Skin exposure may cause irritation or burns. Contact to the eyes may cause blurred vision, eye redness, tearing, lens damage, inability to move the eyes, and may lead to blindness. If ingested, it damages the tissues of the digestive system, causing difficulty swallowing. If inhaled, it causes irritation leading to poor blood circulation and may cause respiratory failure, leading to death. Prolonged inhalation may result in cancer of various organs, such as lung cancer, laryngeal cancer, and nasal sinus cancer. Therefore, regarding the sulfuric acid spill, people residing in the Mekong River basin in the aforementioned provinces should act according to the announcement of the National Water Resources Office by refraining from conducting activities in the Mekong River area and refraining from fishing for aquatic animals, as well as closely monitoring the situation for their own safety.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Local officials and public health agencies should disseminate information to residents in the provinces affected by this incident, including Loei, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen, and Ubon Ratchathani, by alerting the public to the announcement of the National Water Resources Office. The Department of Health has organized an environmental health emergency response team in the area to assess the risk of contamination of sulfuric acid in the Mekong River. They are monitoring the health impact on the local population and monitoring the community water supply in those areas. Furthermore, they are communicating knowledge about correct practices to the residents. If anyone has come into contact with the contaminated water and experiences irritation, skin burns, stinging pain, blistering, blurred or red eyes, they should seek medical attention immediately for assessment and appropriate treatment.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand
Supported by the Thailand MOPH - US CDC Collaboration on Public Health

CONTACT
oic.ddc@gmail.com
02-5903832
www.ddc.go.th/oic

Sources

- <https://www.hfocus.org/content/2024/04/30191>
- https://www.matichon.co.th/region/news_4512012
- <https://www.springnews.co.th/keep-the-world/environment/849243>
- Information courtesy of: The Office of Disease Prevention and Control No. 5, Ratchaburi Province, Division of Environmental and Occupational Diseases and the Bureau of Risk Communication, Department of Disease Control, April 5, 2024.
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-68738004>
- <https://www.hfocus.org/content/2024/04/30196>
- <https://www.hfocus.org/content/2024/04/30204>
- <https://www.hfocus.org/content/2024/04/30188>
- Image courtesy of: <https://shorturl-ddc.moph.go.th/31cxR>