

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2006/04/12/news/story05.html>
© 1996-2006 The Honolulu Star-Bulletin | www.starbulletin.com

Star Bulletin.com

Vol. 11, Issue 102 - Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Woman's bacterial infection blamed on polluted waters off Waikiki hotel

By Rosemarie Bernardo
rbernardo@starbulletin.com

A 40-year-old Waikiki woman claims she contracted a bacterial infection from sewage-polluted waters while surfing at a popular break off of the Hilton Hawaiian Village.

Lisa Kennedy hired attorney Rick Fried to investigate why signs were not posted earlier to warn public of the massive sewage spill that occurred a few days before she went surfing.

During the mid-morning hours of March 28, Kennedy surfed at a spot called Kaisers with her boyfriend, Keeliko Lopes, and two of her friends visiting from the mainland.



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

Rick Fried showed a photo yesterday of the injury Lisa Kennedy suffered while surfing in Waikiki waters tainted with sewage.

Kennedy suffered a gash on her buttocks after she fell on coral. Fried described her wound to be about two inches wide, four inches long and an inch deep. Kennedy went to The Medical Corner in Waikiki before she was transported to the Queen's Medical Center.

Fried said she received five stitches at the hospital.

mitted to Queen's on April 3 after her gash worsened and a culture taken showed bacteria that is detected in fecal matter.

According to Fried, Kennedy's infection is caused by five types of bacteria: two of Escherichia coli origin, which is also known as E. coli; proteus, enterococcus and aeromonis. Four of the five types of bacteria are consistent with fecal matter, he said.

"Those make it pretty clear that it's from the raw sewage," Fried said.

Dr. Keith Stephenson, who treated Kennedy at the Medical Corner and advised her to return to Queen's, said copious amounts of pus were dripping on the floor from her wound.

"If I had a wound like that and I was swimming in the ocean and someone had cultured me, I would be highly suspicious that the water was contaminated," Stephenson said.

An estimated 48 million gallons of raw sewage were diverted into the Ala Wai Canal after a 42-inch force main ruptured on Kaiolu Street in Waikiki on March 24, described as the largest sewage spill in state history.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA KENNEDY
Lisa Kennedy, who says she contracted a bacterial infection while surfing in sewage-polluted Waikiki waters, is shown in an undated photo.

According to Fried, Kennedy said there were no warning signs posted off of Kaisers the day she went surfing, four days after the spill occurred.

Kurt Tsue, spokesman for the Department of Health, said signs were posted at Fort DeRussy and Kahanamoku Beach on March 29, the day after Kennedy suffered a gash.

"Within 24 hours, certainly by Sunday, they should have known what was in the water," Fried said at a news conference yesterday.

Kennedy, who remains at Queen's, said she was on sedatives yesterday and declined comment. Fried said she is currently on a morphine drip and is taking antibiotics intravenously. Kennedy is also attached to an apparatus that is draining out the infected area.

her boyfriend were unaware that a massive sewage spill had occurred. And they had not heard they were supposed to avoid entering the waters -- despite continuous daily news coverage of the spill.

"They tell me they had not seen that," Fried said. "Whether they had or not, there would've been no indication not to go into the area they were going."

The Department of Health said it "exercised its best judgment based on the best information we had at the time" on decisions to post warning signs.

"We sympathize, but that remains to be seen," said city spokesman Mark Matsunaga on whether her infection was caused from the sewage spill.

Matsunaga said they had immediately informed the public after the spill occurred to be cautious of the water condition. He also noted that drift tests taken soon after the spill had showed sewage waters from the canal heading straight out to sea, not at the shoreline.

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2006/04/12/news/story05.html>
© 1996-2006 The Honolulu Star-Bulletin | www.starbulletin.com