

# Scottish Environment Protection Agency

## Dalgety Bay questions and answers

This document provides answers to questions about Dalgety Bay and will be added to as further questions emerge.

Please contact us at [RSenquiries@sepa.org.uk](mailto:RSenquiries@sepa.org.uk) if you have other questions about the radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay that are not included here.

### What is Radium?

Radium is a naturally occurring radioactive element that has been used in the past to luminise instruments such as aircraft dials and watches so that they can be seen in the dark.

### What does high activity mean?

High activity means that the items found are ten times more radioactive than those previously found at Dalgety Bay.

### How effective is the monitoring?

The high activity items have been found by the monitoring programme that SEPA is currently carrying out at Dalgety Bay. This shows that the SEPA monitoring is effective otherwise they would remain undetected.

### How many radioactive items have been removed from Dalgety Bay?

In total more than 2000 radioactive items have been removed from Dalgety Bay.

### What is the hazard to human health?

If someone comes into contact with one of the radioactive items found at Dalgety Bay they may be affected in several ways. Skin contact may cause radiation burns, breathing in radioactive material may cause damage to the lungs and respiratory tract and ingesting radioactive material may cause damage to the stomach and digestive system. In addition, exposure to radioactivity may cause and increased risk of the person developing cancer.

### Is it safe to visit the beach at Dalgety Bay?

SEPA advises anyone visiting the beach at Dalgety Bay to take reasonable precautions to prevent them coming into contact with radioactive items by complying with the advice given on notices around the beach and complying with any restrictions on access to areas that might be marked.

### How does the dose from contamination at Dalgety Bay compare to everyday exposure to radiation?

Some of the sources found at Dalgety Bay could give an individual a radiation dose of 100 milli Sieverts (mSv). The average annual background radiation dose for an individual in the UK is 2.6 mSv; so a Dalgety Bay source could be equivalent to nearly 40 years of background exposure. A chest X-ray can give an individual about 20 micro Sieverts ( $\mu$ Sv),

so a Dalgety Bay source could be equivalent to an individual having about 5000 chest X-rays.

### **What advice is given on the signs at Dalgety Bay?**

Members of the public are advised:

- Not to pick up or remove any materials from this beach (including bait and seafood).
- To wash their hands when leaving the beach.

### **If I don't go on the beach at Dalgety Bay can I get exposed to the radioactive contamination?**

No. The only realistic way you can be exposed to the radium contamination is by close or direct contact with a radioactive source on the beach.

### **Can the beach be cleaned?**

SEPA's ongoing programme of monitoring and retrieval of radioactive items from the beach will reduce the amount of radioactive contamination present. However, some of the radioactive items are moved by the tide which will cause further contamination to be brought onto the beach.

Monitoring and retrieval of radioactive items from the beach will be an ongoing process

### **Is the beach closed?**

SEPA has asked Fife Council to mark part of the beach at Dalgety Bay and put up additional signs advising people not to enter these areas until the high activity radioactive sources can be removed.

### **What is happening in the short-term?**

In the short-term SEPA is analysing the results of its recent monitoring programme prior to determining future actions. SEPA has asked the Ministry of Defence to recover the high activity source that has been identified and remains on the beach.

### **What is the long-term plan to deal with this?**

SEPA is engaging with the Ministry of Defence to develop a long-term strategy for cleaning up the radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay.

### **Is Dalgety Bay the only beach in Fife affected by radioactive contamination?**

Our monitoring programme has established that the main area of radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay is limited to the foreshore area between the headland where the Sailing Club is located and the outfall pipe to the east of the Sailing Club.

We do not believe that any other beaches in Fife are affected by radioactive contamination.

### **What should I do with any items I have collected from Dalgety Bay beach in the past?**

If items have been taken from the affected area, the likelihood that they are contaminated with radioactivity is low. However, we recommend avoiding direct contact with any items collected from Dalgety Bay beach.

**If my boat has been in the water at Dalgety Bay do I need to get it monitored?**

All the radioactive contamination that we have identified so far has been in solid form and unlikely to become attached to boats in the water. Therefore it is not necessary to monitor boats that have been in the water at Dalgety Bay.

**Is it safe to go sailing in Dalgety Bay?**

If you follow the advice on the signs the radiological risk should be minimal.

**Further information**

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) provide further questions and answers regarding health advice on their [website](#) .

**Further information can be obtained from HPA Comms on 01235 822745.**