MEMORANDUM

TO: Communicable Disease Coordinators of Local Health Departments and Regional Offices of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Hospital Emergency Departments, Hospital Infection Control Personnel

FROM: Communicable Disease Control Section

DATE: February 4, 2014

SUBJECT: Haff Disease

On February 4, the Illinois Poison Control Center, reported two suspect cases of Haff disease in Chicago residents. Both cases had consumed buffalo fish on February 1 from a fish market in suburban Cook County prior to their illness.

Haff disease is a syndrome of unexplained rhabdomyolysis following consumption of certain types of fish. In the United States, this is typically the buffalo fish that can be found in the Mississippi river. A toxin found in the fish is currently thought to be the cause of Haff disease, but such a toxin has yet to be identified. Within six hours to 21 hours of eating the fish, persons can experience rhabdomyolysis. Rhabdomyolysis is a clinical syndrome caused by injury to skeletal muscle that results in release of muscle cell contents into the circulation. The person who has eaten the fish may experience muscle tenderness, rigidity and dark brown urine. Symptoms typically resolve within two days to three days and the case fatality rate is about 1 percent. Complications can include renal failure and disseminated intravascular coagulation.

In Illinois, one previous case was reported in 2004 in someone who ate buffalo fish from the Mississippi river.

As part of this investigation, the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Chicago Department of Health are trying to identify other possible cases of Haff disease. We are asking for your help in identifying any possible Haff disease cases in your jurisdiction in 2014. Please report any suspect cases of unexplained rhabdomyolysis in persons who consumed fish in the four hours to 21 hours prior to onset of illness to your local health department. Local health departments should report cases to the IDPH Communicable Disease Control Section. Please collect information on symptoms and details on the fish consumption history (type of fish, where was fish purchased, when was it eaten and when did symptoms begin).