

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

www.ci.norfolk.ne.us

June 22, 2010

“Dirty River Water”

Kids and young adults in swimsuits were swimming in the most unlikely of places this week- the Sunset Plaza Mall parking lot. The water from the flooded Elkhorn River had come up through the storm drains in the parking lot and made for an impromptu concrete swimming hole. Little did the swimmers know what they were swimming in.

“The flood waters are not the same as the typical recreational river water. It’s contaminated with all kinds of things. It potentially has about everything in it,” said John Kouba, a health official with the City of Norfolk.

Kouba said the flood waters have churned through a lot of locations before reaching Norfolk and picked up all sorts of dangerous contaminants including poisonous farm chemicals, manure from feedlot runoff, and gas or other fuels. Trash from parking lots and ditches is also picked up in the flood waters and carried downstream.

“There’s also a question about the waste water treatment systems in the smaller towns upstream that might have been overwhelmed by the flood waters” making human waste contamination a possibility, Kouba said.

Kouba stressed that people should stay out of contact with the flood water as much as possible and if they do need to be in it to reach their property, they need to immediately get cleaned off and wash any article of clothing that was in the water.

“Keep your kids and your pets out of this water. There are contaminants in it that normally would not be there,” said Kouba.