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WATER CONTAMINATION BIGGEST THREAT TO RIO OLYMPICS

Natural Resource (/full-blog?category=Natural+Resource), Impact! (/full-blog?category=Impact%21)

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Every two years, people from around the World come together to celebrate their nationality at the Olympics. Whether it is the Winter, or the Summer Olympics, the games attract the attention of people from all over the world through their television sets, the Internet, media publications, and even those who travel to the locations that host the Olympic games. Recent Olympic games have seen a significant cyber threat to the athletes and spectators visiting. However, this year it seems that a different threat will be affecting the athletes and those working the games; contaminated water.

The 2016 Summer Olympics will be hosted by Brazil, in the City of Rio de Janeiro.[i] Recently, there have been allegations that the host city's water that will be used for the summer games may be contaminated with human sewage.[ii] This was a problem that the committee, who selected the 2016 host city, was well aware of when the games were awarded to Rio.[iii] At that time, in 2009, when the location for the games was announced, Brazilian officials assured the committee, and the world, that those water sources would be safe for the Olympic athletes.[iv] Now, with the Rio Olympics only a year away, the water contamination levels are still a very real threat for tourists and athletes.[v] According to water contamination tests conducted by the Associated Press, the water contamination levels in three Olympic venues and in one popular tourist spot are still not safe for swimming or boating. These water sources were found to contain infectious human adenoviruses, which commonly lead to respiratory and digestive issues, and can even lead to heart, brain, and other diseases.[vi]



(<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/d92f6af5121f49d982601a657d745e95/ap-investigation-rios-olympic-water-rife-sewage-virus>)

With the games less than a year away, many athletes have already visited Brazil in order to train for the games. These athletes have seen firsthand the effects of the contaminated water, becoming sick with fevers and digestive problems after training in the waters around Rio.[vii] Many believe that the waters will not be clean by the time that the Olympics are to start. Kristina Mena, an associate professor of public health at the University of Texas Health Science Center and an expert in water risk assessment, examined the data that was collected in the

Associated Press testing. She determined that the international athletes traveling to the Olympics, who had not built up immunities like those who had grown up in Brazil, had a ninety-nine percent chance of becoming ill after ingesting just three teaspoons of the water.[viii]

These high levels of contamination have many athletes building up their immune systems, and traveling to Brazil early to train and acclimate their bodies to the waters. There have also been suggestions that all those traveling to Brazil for the games be vaccinated for hepatitis A and typhoid.[ix] Overall, there is a great concern for the athletes and Brazilian officials seem to be falling short of their promise to clean up the water sources that will host the 2016 Olympic athletes and the large crowds of tourists who come to watch the games.

[i] *2016 Host City Election*, Olympic, <http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/bidding-for-the-games/past-bid-processes/election-of-the-2016-host-city/> (last visited Aug. 5, 2015).

[ii] John O'Brien, *Should Olympic athletes be worried about Rio water quality?*, MSNBC, (Aug. 4, 2015), <http://www.msnbc.com/andrea-mitchell/should-olympic-athletes-be-worried-about-rio-water-quality>.

[iii] *Id.*

[iv] Brad Brooks & Jenny Barchfield, *AP: Investigation: Olympic teams to swim, boat in Rio's filth*, Associated Press (Jul. 30, 2015), <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/d92f6af5121f49d982601a657d745e95/ap-investigation-rios-olympic-water-rife-sewage-virus>.

[v] *Id.*

[vi] *Id.*

[vii] *Rio waters where Olympians to compete rife with human sewage*, New York Post (July 30, 2015), <http://nypost.com/2015/07/30/olympic-swimmers-may-get-sick-in-rios-water-ap/>.

[viii] *Id.*

[ix] *Id.*

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