

Frequently Asked Questions - Tar Balls

What if I find tar balls on the beach?

- It is the policy of the state, federal and Indian River County government not to expend funds for cleaning up minimal amount of tar balls from beaches.
- Tar balls are a nuisance but are not harmful. It is best to leave them alone.

Where do tar balls come from?

Tar balls originate from three main sources:

- 40% from vessels pumping bilges or tank cleaning;
- 11% from natural seepage from ocean floors; and
- 49% from shoreline facilities, including automotive oils deposited in storm drains.

Are tar balls harmful?

It is possible that if you walk barefoot on the beach you may find tar residue on your feet.

If you do, you should:

- Wash the area with soap and water; baby oil; petroleum jelly or a widely used, safe cleaning compound such as the cleaning past sold at auto parts stores.
- **DO NOT** use gasoline, solvents, or other materials that may be worse to the skin than the existing tar.