



## **FACT SHEET FOR BETHEL:**

### **VESSEL FRANCES SNOW SINKING DIESEL FUEL RELEASE SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES**

#### **SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT PETROLEUM IN SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES?**

Use the following guidelines, traditional knowledge, and common sense to avoid animals that are oiled or ones that don't metabolize oil quickly. (If animals don't metabolize oil quickly, it stays in their bodies for a long time).

- To avoid any potential health risk, harvesting and consumption should be avoided where oil and/or sheens can be seen or smelled on the surface or subsurface sediments or water.
- As the elders teach us, don't collect or eat subsistence food animals that are behaving oddly or have unusual lesions.
- Shellfish, like mussels, don't metabolize oil very quickly, so it stays in their bodies a long time. Also, they are most likely to be re-exposed from oil trapped in sediments. Avoid harvesting these animals from oiled beaches, or if you see or smell oil on the animals.
- We know less about how quickly other intertidal organisms like chitons, limpets, and octopus metabolize oil. However, they are also likely to be re-exposed to oil from oil trapped in sediments. Avoid harvesting these animals from oiled beaches, and don't eat them if you see or smell oil on the animals.
- Adult finfish, such as salmon, are unlikely to absorb significant quantities of oil, or to be adversely affected by small oil spills like this one. If finfish are exposed to large quantities of oil and some of it is absorbed, they can rapidly metabolize it and pass it through their bodies quickly.
- Birds and mammals also rapidly metabolize oil. Check carefully for oiled feathers, feet, or fur. If the birds and mammals do not appear to be oiled and otherwise appear healthy, there is very low risk to you from eating them. If you're still concerned, avoid eating organ meats, especially the liver.
- Plants can also be impacted by a petroleum spill. Avoid consuming any plant material that has come from areas that may have been affected. Indicators such as a non-vegetated area or "dead zone", visible sheen, and fuel smell are all signs that the area might be contaminated and eating or consuming plants should be avoided. Plants may also exhibit signs of contamination, such as brown or dead leaves, wilting, or have leaves with unusual dark spots or edges.
- Contact with diesel fuel could cause skin irritation and inflammation. If possible, avoid direct contact with spill materials. If you have no choice but to handle objects or wildlife that have been in contact with diesel fuel, make sure you prevent contact with your skin. If you get diesel fuel on your skin, wash with soap and water, and launder clothing as you normally would.

If you have health questions about use of subsistence resources, please contact the Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health at **907-269-8000**.