

**FACT SHEET**

March 9, 2009

Subsistence Foods Consumption Safety**BACKGROUND**

On March 5, 2009, the Fishing Vessel (F/V) Mar-Gun ran aground within the surf zone of Straraya Artil located on the north shoreline of St. George Island. An unknown amount of diesel fuel was release. The vessel was carrying approximately 15,000 gallons of diesel fuel, and an unknown amount of lube and hydraulic oil. Samples of subsistence resources will be collected to assess the level of petroleum contaminants and to determine if consuming these resources will present potential health risks.



Photograph by ADEC, March 7, 2009.

SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT PETROLEUM IN SHELLFISH AND OTHER SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES?

Use the following guidelines, traditional knowledge, and common sense to avoid animals that are oiled or ones that do not digest oil quickly.

- 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, do not collect or eat subsistence food animals that are behaving oddly or have unusual lesions.
- Shellfish, like mussels, do not digest oil very quickly. 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 do not eat them if you see or smell oil on the animals.

- Finfish, like salmon, rapidly digest oil. If they survive being exposed to oil, it is processed very quickly through their bodies. If fish do not have oil on them and otherwise appear healthy, there is very low risk to you from eating them.
- Birds and mammals also rapidly digest 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 are still concerned, avoid eating organ meats, especially the liver.

YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING (PSP)!

There is currently an on-going advisory in the state against the gathering and consumption of shellfish except at approved beaches due to PSP. **There are no approved beaches in St. George Island.** The health hazard from PSP is much more serious than any health hazards associated with petroleum contaminants.

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