

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Plankton Immobilized by Diesel Spill in Lake Union, Washington

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During early October 1999, NOAA HazMat provided response assistance to the appearance of slicks and sheen in Fisherman's Terminal, Lake Union, Washington. The material was composed of a brown-colored material and accompanied by a strong diesel odor. Sorbent pads and booms failed to pick up the material. On examination, the surface material was not a chemical but composed of mats of zooplankton, principally cladocerans (*Daphnia spp.*). After careful examination of impacted and non-impacted areas, it was hypothesized that a small diesel spill occurred at night, coinciding with the upward migration of a bloom of *Daphnia*. Upon reaching the surface, the zooplankton became trapped and narcotized by the fuel, resulting in large accumulations of floating biomass over several days.