

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region X
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Wednesday, July 16, 2003

From: Andrew Smith

Subject: Initial/Final

I-5 Gasoline Tanker Explosion in Lynnwood

I-5 Overpass of 44th Ave. W, Exit 181A, Lynnwood, WA

Latitude: 47.8136000

Longitude: -122.2919000

POLREP No.:	1	Site #:	WA0000
Reporting Period:		D.O. #:	
Start Date:	7/12/2003	Response Authority:	OPA
Mob Date:	7/12/2003	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:	7/12/2003	NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:	7/12/2003	Incident Category:	Removal Assessment
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:		Reimbursable Account #	
FPN#			

Site Description

The site is located in Lynnwood, Washington, on northbound Interstate-5 on the overpass bridge crossing 44th Avenue West.

Current Activities

On Saturday, July 12, 2003, at approximately 1245 hours, a double trailer fuel tanker carrying 11,300 gallons of unleaded gasoline drifted off to the right shoulder of northbound Interstate-5 into a concrete barrier on the bridge overpass crossing 44th Avenue West in Lynnwood, Washington and just past northbound Exit 181A. The fuel tanker exploded shortly after impact but with enough time for the driver to escape unharmed by the explosion. The Lynnwood Fire Department used approximately 250,000 gallons of water and 8,000 gallons of foam to combat the fire. Scriber Creek flows under the overpass into a marsh about 75 yards away. This in turn flows into Swamp Creek which then empties into Lake Washington.

I-5 was closed in both directions. Andy Smith, the responding OSC, was mobilized around 1315 hours and was able to arrive on scene quickly since he lives nearby. The Phone Duty Officer mobilized the START-2 shortly after the OSC arrived on scene. Initial concerns were that of gasoline flowing downstream into Lake Washington. However since the stream moves very slowly and flows almost immediately into a marsh with hardly no water movement at all, initial concerns appeared unfounded. The second concern was that there might be a high concentration of gasoline in the creek and marsh. The initial inspection of Scriber Creek and the marsh by the OSC and Snohomish County emergency coordinator, surprisingly found very little evidence of gasoline. They could only conclude that either most of the gasoline was consumed in the flames or might have flowed elsewhere.

The START-2, Lee Shin and Suzanne Dohlberg, arrived on site at 1615 hours. The OSC tasked the START-2 to conduct a more thorough site reconnaissance with instruments. Once WDOE arrived the OSC tasked them to support WDOE in their survey of the creek by providing technical assistance such as sample collection, placing boom and padding to contain any fuel, and providing photographic documentation as well as further instrumentation reading of organic vapors. There was not sufficient fuel in the creek to bother setting out booms or pads.

The START-2 and WDOE conducted air monitoring for organic vapors in the Scriber Creek area beneath the freeway overpass. While slight gasoline odors were intermittent in the Scriber Creek drainage and some light sheening was seen, organic vapors at concentrations above background were not detected using instruments. The lack of measurable organic vapors is likely due to the foam used to suppress the fire. The START-2 conducted downstream reconnaissance and did not identify any additional petroleum odors or sheening further downstream than the area immediately impacted by the release.

Public work staff from Mountlake Terrace and familiar with the drainage in the area also looked for evidence of fuel and found none.

EPA's Public Information Officer, Mark MacIntyre provide information to Northwest Cable News, KING, KOMO, KIRO (TV and radio), and KCPQ. He also worked with DOE who asked him to continue his efforts as they didn't have a PIO available.

The OSC and START-2 demobilized around 1945 after conferring with DOE that they did not need further assistance. DOE stayed on scene late into the night. The all-night investigation conducted by DOE indicated that most of the gasoline volatilized during the fire and was not released to the Scriber Creek area in large amounts. While the southbound lanes of I-5 opened a few hours after the incident, the northbound lanes remained closed till the early morning hours of Sunday.

Planned Removal Actions

The Washington State Department of Ecology Fish and Wildlife will conduct long-term environmental impact studies in the areas impacted by the release and subsequent response activities.

response.epa.gov/I5TankerExplosion