Anaerobic Encyclopedia Article

Anaerobic

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Anaerobic

This term refers to an **environment** lacking in molecular oxygen (O_2), or to an organism, tissue, chemical reaction, or biological process that does not require oxygen. Anaerobic organisms can use a molecule other than O_2 as the terminal electron acceptor in **respiration**. These organisms can be either obligate, meaning that they cannot use O_2, or facultative, meaning that they do not require oxygen but can use it if it is available.

Organic matter **decomposition** in poorly aerated environments, including water-logged soils, septic tanks, and anaerobically-operated waste treatment facilities, produces large amounts of **methane** gas. The methane can become an atmospheric pollutant, or it may be captured and used for fuel, as in "biogas"-powered electrical generators. Anaerobic decomposition produces the notorious "swamp gases" that have been reported as unidentified flying objects (UFOs).