



U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL
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PRESS RELEASE

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For More Information Contact:
Mary Binder
(541) 564-5312 / 379-8810
Rick Kelley
(541) 564-7304/571-1779

UMCDF Agent Operations Suspended Following Project Procedural Incident

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT (UMCD), HERMISTON, Ore. – All agent disposal operations at the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) were suspended today pending completion of a project management review.

Washington Group International initiated the review after two UMCDF workers unclamped an incorrect door inside one of the plant's filter units causing the slow migration of low levels of chemical agent vapor into an adjacent room where secondary safety controls were in place.

The employees were not exposed to chemical agent and there was no release of agent into the atmosphere. The filter room was equipped with a passive filter system similar to systems used by the Army on the depot's chemical agent weapons storage bunkers.

At approximately 8:30 p.m. Dec. 1, the workers were preparing to perform a test on a Heating, Ventilation and Cooling (HVC) filter unit that was out of service for repair when they unclamped one of the unit's 10 doors. The filter unit is one of nine used to clean plant air before it is released through a common stack.

"Although the door was not opened, unclamping it allowed agent vapor to migrate into the adjacent room," stated Steve Kirkendall, UMCDF Plant Manager for Washington Group.

The project's air-monitoring system detected that low levels of chemical agent vapor were in the room. The filter unit was placed back into service and

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within minutes the agent vapor was drawn back into the filter unit.

“The UMCDF strives for perfection in its people, plant and procedures to maximize protecting our workers, the public and the environment,” Don Barclay, the Army’s UMCDF Site Project Manager, explained. “In this incident, the plant’s redundant safety features worked as designed to provide protection. However, there apparently was a breakdown in people and procedures. So, when something like this happens, we stop, question and initiate corrective actions. The contractor is in the process of doing just that.”

Depot Commander Lt. Col. David “Doc” Holliday noted the review will be thorough and the community will be kept informed.

“All off-post emergency response centers surrounding the Depot were notified immediately,” Holliday said. “We recognize the need to keep the communities, elected officials and the public informed, and we will do so.”

Agent operations will resume once the review concludes and corrective actions are initiated.

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The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency is responsible for safely storing and eliminating the United States’ aging chemical weapons and agent stockpiles and for the safe elimination of recovered chemical materiel.

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