



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Umatilla Depot begins 8-inch VX artillery projectile disposal

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – Umatilla Chemical Depot storage workers today began delivering 8-inch diameter VX-filled artillery projectiles to the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF), marking the official start of a new individual munitions campaign. The first 8-inch VX projectiles or “shells” will soon be processed at UMCDF.

“Depot workers take a lot of pride in safely storing and transporting munitions to the disposal plant,” said Lt. Col. Bob Stein, depot commander. “Since starting agent operations in 2004, we’ve successfully completed several thousand munitions shipments without an accident or incident, and we plan to keep it that way.”

Since the start of agent operations at the UMCDF nearly four years ago, about 5,800 enhanced on-site containers (EONCs) loaded with munitions have been safely delivered from the depot storage areas to the disposal plant. The containers are designed to resist impacts, punctures, crushing and fire.

“Each campaign brings us closer to keeping our commitment to eliminate the Oregon chemical weapons stockpile and its risk to surrounding communities,” said Mike Strong, the Army’s site project manager at Umatilla. “It’s great to get started on another campaign.”

The 8-inch VX projectiles campaign is the 11th individual munitions disposal campaign for the depot and disposal plant. It is expected to take about a month to destroy the projectiles. A total of 13 individual disposal campaigns will be required to completely eliminate the Oregon stockpile.

The UMCDF destroyed the last of 32,313 155mm diameter VX projectiles on June 27. During the next several weeks, the munitions processing equipment in the plant was reconfigured to handle the larger 8-inch projectiles, which hold about 14 pounds of VX nerve agent compared to about 6 pounds for the 155mm shells. Disposal workers processed 14,246 8-inch projectiles during the GB (sarin) nerve agent campaign.

When 8-inch VX projectiles are gone, the only VX munitions remaining will be land mines. The “change over” from projectiles to mines is expected to take about two months, and mine processing is scheduled to be completed by early next year if there are no significant delays.

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The plant will then change over to process HD mustard blister agent stored in bulk containers, also known as “ton containers.” HD mustard will be the third and final type of agent disposal campaign at Umatilla, and its eventual elimination will mark the end of the Oregon chemical weapons stockpile.

The first chemical munitions disposal campaign in Oregon began on Sept. 7, 2004, with the first shipment of GB rockets. Since that time, the following munitions disposal campaigns have been successfully and safely completed:

- 4 GB (sarin-filled) bulk containers or “ton containers” completed Jan. 5, 2006.
- 27 GB 500-pound bombs completed May 18, 2006.
- 2,418 GB 750-pound bombs completed June 9, 2006.
- 91,442 GB rockets and warheads completed Aug. 9, 2006.
- 14,246 GB 8-inch diameter artillery projectiles completed Jan. 3, 2007.
- 47,406 GB 155mm diameter artillery projectiles completed July 8, 2007.
- One VX bulk container or “ton container” completed Nov. 26, 2007.
- 156 VX aircraft-mounted spray tanks completed Dec. 24, 2007.
- 14,519 VX rockets and warheads completed Jan. 23, 2008.
- 32,313 VX 155mm projectiles completed June 27, 2008.

When the Umatilla chemical munitions destruction mission is complete, the disposal plant will be thoroughly cleaned and disassembled according to environmental permits. The Umatilla Chemical Depot is slated for closure per the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) law. Chemical munitions have been stored at the depot since the 1960s.

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