



U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL
MATERIALS AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

Umatilla Chemical Depot

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For more information contact:
Bruce Henrickson, Army Public Affairs
(541) 564-5312 – Cell (541) 379-8810
Hal McCune, Washington Defense Group
(541) 564-7304 – Cell (541) 571-1779

Disposal plant worker had bottled air supply problem

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. - A Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) worker performing ventilation system pre-filters maintenance yesterday while wearing self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) was suddenly unable to get air from his equipment. He quickly exited the work area, put on a new mask, and removed some of his protective equipment with help from emergency backup personnel. That equipment was placed in the sealed bag as a precaution since the worker was performing tasks in an area of potential chemical agent contamination.

No chemical agent was detected by two different types of monitoring equipment in each of two vestibules through which the worker passed as he exited the work area to get air. When he re-entered the vestibule, additional monitoring revealed no agent present on him. However, trace amounts of chemical agent were later detected in the sealed bag of his used equipment. The worker was evaluated at the medical clinic and had no symptoms of agent exposure.

Because the worker stepped outside the vestibule momentarily, the UMCDF complied with its operating permit which requires reporting of potential agent release to the state. Army and plant officials are reviewing plant controls, procedures and training to prevent a similar event.

Army officials also notified off-post emergency operations centers in Umatilla and Morrow counties, Ore.; and Benton County, Wash.; plus officials in Oregon and Washington states; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality about the worker equipment contamination.

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