



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Umatilla Depot begins final VX-filled munitions disposal campaign

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – Umatilla Chemical Depot storage workers began delivering VX-filled land mines to the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) this morning. This marks the official start of the last of six individual VX munitions disposal campaigns at the depot. The first of the land mines is planned to be destroyed at the UMCDF later today.

“We’ve safely and securely moved 5,876 loads of chemical weapons from storage to the disposal plant since we started doing so in 2004, and without accident or incident,” said Lt. Col. Bob Stein, depot commander. “I thank a great team of dedicated workers for our mission success so far.”

“This marks the beginning of the end of VX-filled munitions at the depot,” said Mike Strong, the Army’s site project manager at Umatilla. “We look forward to the time when Oregon’s stockpile no longer contains any VX nerve agent.”

The land mines and other munitions are transported from storage to the disposal plant in enhanced on-site containers (EONCs). The containers are designed to resist impacts, punctures, crushing and fire.

The VX land mines campaign is the 12th individual munitions disposal campaign for the depot and disposal plant. It is expected to take about two months to destroy the land mines. A total of 13 individual disposal campaigns will be required to completely eliminate the Oregon stockpile.

The UMCDF destroyed the last of 3,752 VX-filled 8-inch diameter artillery projectiles or “shells” on August 7. Since that time, the munitions disposal equipment and procedures in the plant were reconfigured to handle the VX land mines in what is called a “changeover” process.

When the VX land mines are gone, there will be no more nerve agent of any type in the Oregon stockpile, which originally contained both VX and GB (sarin) filled munitions. The only remaining chemical munitions in Oregon will then be bulk containers or “ton containers” of HD mustard blister agent. Mustard agent disposal will be the 13th and final disposal campaign at Umatilla.

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When the VX nerve agent is gone, the changeover of equipment and procedures from VX land mines to mustard-filled ton containers processing is expected to take about five months. Mustard agent destruction is expected to take one to two years to complete if there are no significant delays.

The first chemical munitions disposal campaign in Oregon began on Sept. 7, 2004, with the first shipment of GB-filled rockets. Since that time, the following 11 chemical munitions disposal campaigns have been successfully and safely completed:

- 4 GB (sarin-filled) bulk containers or “ton containers” completed Jan. 5, 2006. (This was a Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project (NSCMP) mission.)
- 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. (This was a Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project (NSCMP) mission.)
- 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.
- 3,752 VX 8-inch projectiles completed August 6, 2008.

Some of the disposal campaigns ran simultaneously. The disposal plant has multiple processing lines and is capable of safely disposing of different types of munitions at the same time.

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 safely and securely stored at the depot since the 1960s. The depot opened in 1941.

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