

# Fact Sheet – Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

## Eastern Region Chemical Demilitarization Program

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## Umatilla Chemical Demilitarization Program

### Oregon's Chemical Weapons Stockpile

In 1962, the U.S. Army began storage of chemical weapons at the Umatilla Chemical Depot, located near of Hermiston, Ore. The stockpile eventually reached a total of 3,717 tons of chemical warfare agent in about 220,000 individual munitions, such as rockets and land mines, as well as bulk containers. Chemical agents include the nerve agents GB (also called "sarin") and VX, and the blister agent HD, known as "mustard." All U.S. chemical weapon stockpiles must be destroyed under the international treaty known as the "Chemical Weapons Convention."

After intense and prolonged public debate, the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) granted a Hazardous Waste Storage and Treatment Permit to the Army in February 1997. The Army awarded the Umatilla contract to the Washington Demilitarization Company (formerly Raytheon) and construction of the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility was declared complete in August 2001.

### U.S. Army's National Chemical Demilitarization Program

The Army's Chemical Materials Agency is responsible for safely disposing of the nation's chemical weapons stockpiles. The Army built a prototype incineration facility at Johnston Atoll located approximately 750 miles from Hawaii and started operations there in 1990. The stockpile at Johnston Atoll and all leftover process waste has since been destroyed.

Umatilla is one of eight original chemical weapons stockpile sites in the continental U.S., which use either incineration or neutralization to destroy chemical agent. The first continental U.S. incinerator was constructed near Tooele, Utah and began operations in 1996. To date, Tooele has destroyed all GB and VX nerve agent

in its inventory and is currently destroying munitions containing mustard agent.

The stockpiles in Anniston, Ala., Pine Bluff, Ark., and Umatilla also use incineration. Anniston began operations in 2003, Umatilla in 2004 and Pine Bluff in 2005.

The stockpiles in Aberdeen, Md., Newport, Ind., Pueblo, Colo., and Blue Grass, Ky. will be destroyed using neutralization. The Aberdeen facility began operations in 2003 and completed work in 2006. The Newport facility began operations in 2005. The neutralization facilities in Colorado and Kentucky are still in the engineering or construction phases.

### DEQ's Role in Program Oversight

DEQ's Chemical Demilitarization Program (CDP) oversees the day-to-day operation of the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF). CDP staff, based in nearby Hermiston, ensures that the Army and its contractor comply with the hazardous waste and air permits issued by the State of the Oregon in 1997. The CDP Administrator reports directly to the DEQ's Office of the Director and manages a staff of hazardous waste compliance and permitting specialists, engineers, and support staff that work solely on the Umatilla project.

### Supporting State Agencies in the Program

Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) is the lead state agency for emergency response. OEM works closely with the Umatilla and Morrow County Emergency Management Agencies (and Benton County, Washington). The Oregon Public Health Service supports DEQ and OEM with toxicology expertise for emergency planning and health risk assessments. The U.S. and Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Administrations entered into an agreement to

have joint oversight of worker safety issues at the Umatilla Chemical Depot and the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. The Governor's Office has also been actively engaged with issues surrounding the Umatilla facility. The CDP Administrator maintains regular contact with staff from the Office of the Governor.

### **Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF)**

UMCDF consists of two liquid incinerators to treat liquid agent, a "deactivation furnace system" to treat explosives and propellants, and a "metal parts furnace" to treat emptied munitions and other wastes.

Because of the extreme toxicity of the chemical warfare agents, UMCDF first demonstrated the performance of the incinerators by conducting "shakedown" tests and trial burns using "surrogate" material. Surrogate materials are chemicals that are not as toxic as chemical warfare agent, but are considered more difficult to burn. Agent operations began in September 2004 and are scheduled to take approximately seven years. A period to close and dismantle the facility will follow.

### **Current Status**

The Umatilla disposal facility has achieved a number of production milestones. The last GB bomb in the Umatilla and U.S. stockpile was destroyed on June 9, 2006. The final GB munition, an artillery shell, was eliminated on July 8, 2007. The final VX spray tank in the Umatilla and U.S. stockpile was destroyed on Dec. 24, 2007.

The final rocket in the Umatilla stockpile, a VX munition, was destroyed in January 2008.

GB agent Liquid Incinerator 1 shakedown runs began in October 2004, followed by GB agent trial burns in June and July 2005 for Liquid Incinerator 1 and the Deactivation Furnace, in March 2006 for the Metal Parts Furnace and June 2006 for Liquid Incinerator 2. Shakedown runs for processing secondary waste in the Metal Parts Furnace began in October 2006, and the secondary waste trial burn was completed in January 2007. VX agent trial burns on Liquid Incinerator 2 and the Metal Parts Furnace were

conducted in December 2007 and on the Deactivation Furnace in January 2008.

A local group called "GASP" (in conjunction with the Sierra Club, the Oregon Wildlife Federation, and individuals) has filed four lawsuits against the Environmental Quality Commission and the DEQ. The first two cases were administratively decided in the State's favor by the Multnomah County Circuit Court and are currently on appeal with the Oregon Court of Appeals.

A third case ("GASP III") was filed in July 2000 after the Environmental Quality Commission refused to revoke the UMCDF Permit for the request of the GASP Petitioners. In a fourth case, filed in November 2007, a group including GASP filed a petition against the DEQ and EQC seeking judicial review of the state's "Order Determining Best Available Technology (BAT) for Secondary Waste." All issues regarding the cases have yet to be resolved.

### **Where to get more information**

Contact the DEQ office in Hermiston, 256 East Hurlburt (Suite 105). Please call (541) 567-8297 (toll-free in Oregon 1-800-452-4011).

### **Alternative formats**

*Alternative formats of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ at (541) 567-8297. People with hearing impairment may call DEQ's TTY at 800-735-2900.*

