

NEWS RELEASE

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Emergency Planning Reminder from BCES

Richland, WA – With the imminent startup of the incineration process, it's a good time to remind local residents who live within the Umatilla Chemical Depot's Emergency Response Zones about the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP). Benton County and the state of Washington have partnered with federal agencies to develop detailed emergency plans to protect residents during a potential release of chemicals from the Depot.

“The majority of our county is actually outside the Depot's Emergency Response Zones,” said Steve Sautter, public information officer for Benton County Emergency Services (BCES). “The only two Washington towns within the emergency zone are Plymouth and Paterson.”

These two communities are in an area called the Immediate Response Zone that surrounds the Depot. In a chemical emergency, county plans call for the residents of these two communities to evacuate their homes to the west and north.

Extending beyond the Immediate Response Zone is the Protective Action Zone. This area extends north to Sellards and Locust Grove roads, east to Finley Road and West to the Benton County line with Klickitat County. Residents within this zone are considered to be at a much lower risk and their distance from the Depot would allow more time to take protective actions if a chemical releaser were to occur.

“Our agency supplies special Tone Alert Radios to the residents within the CSEPP emergency planning zones,” noted Sautter. “These radios and the outdoor warning sirens are our primary methods of notifying residents of an incident at the Depot.”

Additional information on emergency planning for the Depot, along with other emergency planning materials, can be found on the Internet at www.bces.wa.gov or by calling BCES at (509) 628-2600 or (800) 841-7953.

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