



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT

For immediate release

Date: Dec. 12, 2005

Time: 2 p.m.

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Umatilla facility reaches GB-rocket milestone

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – Half the Umatilla Chemical Depot's GB rockets have been destroyed, greatly reducing the risk to the community of a chemical accident.

At about noon Saturday, the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility processed the 45,721st rocket containing nerve agent GB, also known as sarin. In its original stockpile, the depot stored 91,442 GB rockets.

"I'm especially pleased knowing that with each processing milestone, we reduce the public risk associated with storing these weapons," said Don Barclay, Army site project manager for the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. "We committed to reducing risk by processing GB rockets first, and we are well on our way to destroying all GB rockets by the end of 2006."

Congress started the chemical weapons disposal program in the 1980s out of concern for the rockets stability during long-term storage. Because they pose the greatest danger in storage, GB rockets have been the first type of chemical ammunition eliminated at Army installations that have stored them.

Although the rockets destroyed to date represent only about 7 percent of Umatilla's original chemical agent stockpile, risk assessment calculations show overall storage risk has been reduced by about 53 percent, Barclay explained. Total, Umatilla's GB rockets account for about 85 percent of public risk, its VX rockets about 14 percent and the remaining chemical weapons and containers less than 1 percent. Besides rockets, the depot's stockpile has bombs, projectiles, land mines, spray tanks and bulk storage containers commonly called ton containers.

Rocket disposal operations at the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility began Sept. 8, 2004, with the destruction of a single rocket. In September 2005, the facility began processing GB bombs along with the rockets, with 88 bombs eliminated to date.

"I'm proud of the entire Umatilla team and the fact they have achieved this milestone with an impressive safety record," said Lt. Col. Donna Rutten, depot commander. "The community can be justifiably proud of what has been accomplished."

As of today, disposal facility personnel have worked 1.8 million safe work hours (415 days) since the last lost workday.

For more information,
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Chemical Materials
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www.cma.army.mil

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