



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT

For Immediate Release:
June 25, 2005

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MEDIA ADVISORY

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – Attached is a press release the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) issued June 21. CMA is the headquarters agency for Umatilla Chemical Depot.

The press release provides the second update on the Army's rocket task force's on-going investigation into the recent rocket fires at the Umatilla, and Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark., disposal facilities during destruction operations.

If you have questions pertaining to the press release, please refer to the point of contact listed in the CMA release. If you have questions pertaining to Umatilla Chemical Depot and the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility project, please contact Mary Alice Binder, public affairs officer.

**For more information,
contact the
Chemical Materials
Agency Public
Affairs Office.**

www.cma.army.mil



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Media Update #2: Rocket Fire Investigation

WHAT: Umatilla Chemical Depot munitions workers disassembled nine rockets and then shipped the motor assemblies from Umatilla Chemical Depot, Umatilla, Oregon, to the Armament Engineering & Test Center at Picatinny Arsenal, Dover, New Jersey. These nine motors were selected from three manufacturer's propellant lots associated with the rocket fires at Umatilla. At Picatinny, these motor assemblies will undergo propellant and igniter analysis. Testing is expected to take about four to six weeks. A similar effort is in the planning stages for rockets stored at Pine Bluff.

This is a part of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency rocket task force as it continues to perform an in-depth investigation into five fires that occurred in April and May at its Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) in Oregon and Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (PBCDF) in Arkansas. The fires occurred while processing drained GB-filled M55 rockets in an Explosive Containment Room designed specifically to contain such an event. There was never any danger to personnel or any release of agent to the environment.

WHEN: UMCDF experienced fires while processing rockets on April 7th; April 23rd; and May 18th of this year. PBCDF experienced similar fires while processing rockets on May 11th and May 22nd. There was never any danger to personnel or any release of agent to the environment.

WHO: Mr. Michael Parker, Director of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency, appointed Mr. Gregory St. Pierre, Director of CMA's Risk Management, to lead the rocket task force. St. Pierre has 22 years of experience in chemical weapons risk mitigation and problem solving.

**For more information,
contact the
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www.cma.army.mil

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CMA COMMENT: Mr. St. Pierre said, "We are employing the best expertise available in investigating these fires. Chemical weapons disposal is a complex business with safety of our workers, our communities and our environment at its core. Upset conditions are expected but safety systems in place worked as designed. We await the insight the experts at the U.S. Army Armament Engineering & Technology center in Picatinny can shed on this subject."

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS: The rocket task force includes a mix of experts from CMA, Washington Group International (WGI), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southwest Research Institute, Sandia National Laboratory, EG&G, and the U.S. Army Armament Engineering & Technology Center.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: UMCDF received approval from the state of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to restart rocket processing on June 9, 2005. From June 9 to June 15, UMCDF safely destroyed 1,530 GB-filled, M55 rockets without incident. PBCDF did not cease operations in this period. From June 7 to June 13, PBCDF safely destroyed 1,187 GB-filled, M55 rockets. This brings Umatilla's total of rockets destroyed to 16,040 to date; Pine Bluff's total is 10,018 rockets to date.

Two preliminary reports, one a review of the ECR structure design and one an assessment of whether or not the increased frequency of fires increases the risk to the public from M55 rocket disposal operations, are available to interested parties. Requests can be made to the point of contact noted above or by going to the CMA Web site, www.cma.army.mil.

To date, preliminary assessments have indicated that the rockets remain stable in storage and through routine handling operations that bring them to the disposal process. At this point, all fires have been associated only with rockets involved in the actual shearing/disposal process.

More information will be released as it becomes available.

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The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency is responsible for safely storing and eliminating the United States' aging chemical weapons and agent stockpiles and for the safe elimination of recovered chemical materiel.

**For more information,
contact the
Chemical Materials
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