

News Release

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DEQ Approves Restart of Rocket Processing at Umatilla Facility

UMCDF completes agency requirements

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is giving its approval for the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) near Hermiston to resume the processing of M55 rockets on Thursday, June 9.

DEQ officials had halted the facility's destruction of the GB (sarin) filled rockets on May 18 when the third in a recent series of fires occurred in the explosive containment rooms at the plant during the rocket chopping process. On April 7, April 23, and May 18 low-order explosions occurred as a robotic shear blade cut through rocket sections containing propellant, followed by ignition of the propellant.

An extensive three-week review since the shutdown provided state regulators with detailed information regarding the facility's investigation into the cause of the fires, the safety of the facility in case of future fires, and identification of actions already taken or under consideration by UMCDF to reduce the frequency of future fires or mitigate their consequences.

"The Army and its contractor, Washington Demilitarization Company, have provided all of the requested materials to DEQ in a timely manner and, based upon our review, we are satisfied that the facility is prepared to safely resume the destruction of M55 rockets containing chemical agent," said Dennis Murphey, DEQ Chemical Demilitarization Program administrator.

For more information contact DEQ's Umatilla Chemical Demilitarization Program, 256 E. Hurlburt Ave., Suite 105, Hermiston, OR 97838. Comments may also be faxed to (541) 567-4741 or e-mailed to cdp@deq.state.or.us.

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Department of
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