



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:
Bruce Henrickson – Public Affairs Office
(541) 564-5312
Jim Hackett – Public Affairs Office
(541) 564-5418

Umatilla Depot seeks World War II depot workers and descendents for commemoration

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – In anticipation of a 65th anniversary commemoration of the March 1944 World War II accidental explosion of conventional munitions at the Umatilla Chemical Depot in Hermiston, the depot would like to hear from depot workers of that era or their family members. Invitations to a brief March 19 commemoration ceremony on the depot will be extended to those workers or family members, plus current depot employees.

Of particular interest are family members or descendents of the six workers who died in a March 21, 1944 conventional munitions accident. It still stands as the only fatal munitions handling accident in the history of the depot since it opened in 1941 on the eve of World War II.

“It’s important to honor World War II workers and their family members for their service and sacrifice,” said Lt. Col. Bob Stein, depot commander. “Memorial markers at the 1944 accident site and on the depot parade ground still serve as reminders that munitions must be handled safely.”

On March 21, 1944, depot storage igloo B-1014 containing 264 500-pound conventional bombs was completely destroyed in an accident. Killed in the accident were Kenneth LeRoy Fraser, foreman; Lance Stultz, lift truck operator; William Sanders, munitions handler; Harry Dwight Sever, munitions handler; Hiram Cook, truck driver; and Alice Wolgamott, junior laborer. Two crew members working on a nearby railroad pier survived—Glenn P. Long, foreman, and Cecil Pennington, foreman. An extensive Army investigation was unable to determine the specific cause of the accident.

A similar commemoration ceremony was held last year. Interested World War II-era depot workers or their family members should provide their name, address, phone number and photo ID number such as a driver’s license number by Wednesday, March 11, to Steve Meyers at the Umatilla Chemical Disposal Outreach Office in Hermiston at 541-564-9339. This information will be used to permit access to the depot for a brief ceremony. Bus or van transportation will be provided from the depot main gate to the site of the ceremony. Ceremony guests should bring warm clothing.

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Media: If you are interested in covering this ceremony on the afternoon of March 19, please contact Jim Hackett at james.s.hackett@us.army.mil or 541-564-5418 by March 18. Photography will be allowed within certain security requirements.

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