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U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) is to protect, safely store and destroy aging chemical weapons while working toward the effective recovery, treatment and ultimate elimination of the nation's chemical warfare materiel.

The CMA headquarters management team, as well as scientific, communications and support staff, is based at the Edgewood Area of the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, while other dedicated managers and staff fulfill the agency's mission from weapons storage and disposal sites at locations across the country.

CMA manages three mission areas that are described in more detail below.

Destruction

The agency is responsible for two distinct chemical weapons destruction projects.

The Chemical Stockpile Elimination Project (CSEP) manages the safe treatment and disposal of chemical weapons using incineration and neutralization technologies.

Incineration, also referred to as "baseline incineration," was selected as the Army's preferred chemical weapons disposal technology in 1985 based on rigorous tests and comparisons of various technologies. Communities in Anniston, Ala., Pine Bluff, Ark., Umatilla, Ore., and Tooele, Utah, use incineration for their chemical weapons disposal. The first incineration facility, a pilot facility, was built on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean and successfully completed disposal operations in November 2000. The facility was dismantled and the atoll was returned to its natural state and serves as a wildlife refuge.

Neutralization was first selected as an alternative to incineration for bulk agent storage sites only. Depending on the type of agent to be destroyed, neutralization involves mixing the chemical agent with either hot water or hot water and sodium hydroxide in order to eliminate the harmful characteristics of the agent. This process was used successfully in Edgewood, Md., to eliminate its entire stockpile of mustard, or blister agent. Neutralization is also used in Newport, Ind., where there is only one type of chemical agent, stored in large steel containers without explosives or other weapon components. Neutralization is the selected method for the Department of Defense's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program facilities near Richmond, Ky., and Pueblo, Colo.

The Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project (NSCMP) develops and deploys technologies for use in the safe assessment and treatment of recovered chemical materiel. NSCMP's mobile and fixed assessment technologies enable on-site personnel to identify the contents and explosive configuration of materiel discovered at burial sites. Mobile treatment technologies process recovered chemical materiel at the recovery site in complete environmental containment, protecting citizens and the environment.

A related NSCMP mission is the treatment and safe disposal of miscellaneous chemical warfare materiel such as obsolete lab samples and contaminated equipment.

NSCMP is responsible for eliminating materiel developed in support of the binary chemical weapons program, a 1980s effort to modernize America's chemical weapons arsenal and the demolition of the nation's former chemical munitions production and fill facilities.

Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives

Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA), a separate Department of Defense program, is responsible for the safe destruction of the Army's chemical weapons stored in Colorado and Kentucky. The program oversees the design, construction, systemization, testing, operation and closing of the pilot plants that will destroy the chemical weapons at both locations.

For more information, contact the CMA Public Affairs Office at (410) 436-3629 (800) 488-0648

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Our Mission (continued)

Storage

CMA is also responsible for the safe storage of the nation's chemical weapons stockpile before its ultimate destruction. CMA manages a National Inventory Control Point and National Maintenance Point to ensure the stockpile is maintained safely during its remaining storage life.

CMA also partners with the Department of Homeland Security in the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) to ensure effective emergency preparedness of the communities surrounding the stockpile storage sites. CSEPP provides funding for chemical accident response equipment and warning systems. CSEPP also oversees yearly community-wide emergency preparedness exercises at all of the stockpile sites and works with communities to conduct public education activities to enable residents to respond appropriately to a chemical stockpile incident.

International cooperation

In addition, CMA is meeting its commitment to its mission as outlined in the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention, which more than 160 nations have signed as their pledge to rid the world of this class of weapons.

Technical expertise, training and financial support for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of chemical weapons located at seven sites within independent states of the former Soviet Union are provided through the Cooperative Threat Reduction program.

Summary

From dedicated workers ensuring safe, secure storage and destruction, to technical experts collaborating with international colleagues, CMA strives to accomplish its mission to create a safer tomorrow.