

Highlighting
the U.S. Army's
Chemical
Demilitarization
Program

Reach

Pine Bluff / White Hall
Summer 2002

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Kids want to know



Outreach specialist Regina Smith (at center) talks with students during an Earth Day celebration at Forrest Park Elementary in Pine Bluff.

They may be young, but Arkansas students ask thoughtful—and often imaginative—questions about chemical demilitarization. Call the outreach office for information about school presentations, interactive materials, fact sheets, fun activity pages and other resources for students.



Outreach specialist Rebecca Farnsworth shows students from Alzheimer's Martin Elementary posters about Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System's National Wildlife Refuge.



Sean Rabalais, a Crossett seventh grader, views rocket models while visiting the outreach office to interview Lt. Col. Benjamin Hagar, Pine Bluff Chemical Activity commander, for a History Day project.

CSEPP exercises improve emergency preparedness

If you live near the Pine Bluff Arsenal you may have witnessed it—warning sirens blaring and emergency responders hurrying to their assigned posts and other locations as scenarios change. It's often a loud, hectic scurry of activity at the arsenal and off-post, but it winds to a close within just a few hours.

Participants in and observers of Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program exercises are familiar with the sights and sounds, but many may not be aware of the extensive, careful planning required for the drills. Although an exercise generally begins and ends within a single eight-hour work shift, it typically represents nearly a full year of preparation.

It's well worth it, according to Army and state and local officials, who use CSEPP exercises to prepare for the unlikely event of a chemical emergency at the arsenal. Emergency preparedness is a cornerstone commitment of the chemical stockpile program. The drills help Army personnel, local leaders, emergency workers and others from the 10 counties surrounding the arsenal to practice working together effectively.

"An exercise tests the entire emergency response effort and evaluates the interaction of the Army and the community," said Pine Bluff Chemical Activity CSEPP Coordinator Butch Reeves.

This year's full-fledged CSEPP exercise was held on Feb. 13. The drill simulated an explosion of VX rockets in the chemical storage area at the arsenal. Under the mock scenario, winds carried a chemical plume east across the Arkansas River, forcing



Col. Mark R. Henscheid, Pine Bluff Arsenal commander (left), and Jefferson County Judge Jack Jones brief "reporters" during a simulated media briefing at the Joint Information Center.

the evacuation of 320 area residents. Although the areas were not really evacuated for the drill, responders established evacuation routes, reception centers and shelters. Three chemical workers were "injured" in the mock explosion, and nine other "injuries" occurred in traffic accidents related to the evacuation. These simulated details helped area hospitals practice treating mock victims.



CSEPP responders assist an "injured" worker during a Feb. 13 exercise. Evaluators, identified as those not wearing protective gear, observe all actions during the exercise.

"Our firefighters, law enforcement, medical personnel and emergency managers all worked together to open evacuation routes, decontamination stations and shelters," said Jimmy J. Featherston, coordinator of the Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management.

"The year-round planning and training paid off," Featherston said. "We all worked very well together during the exercise. I was very pleased."

Exercises are evaluated by trained CSEPP observers from around the country. "The findings are then integrated into planning for the next year's exercise," Reeves said. "It's a continuing cycle of establishing and meeting challenges and then enhancing those skills."

Editor's Note: This article is the second in a series about the cornerstone commitments for the chemical stockpile program at Pine Bluff. The Spring 2002 REACH featured an article on safe and secure storage. Future REACH editions will discuss proven technology and environmental stewardship.

"An exercise tests the entire emergency response effort and evaluates the interaction of the Army and the community."

*- Butch Reeves, Pine Bluff
Chemical Activity CSEPP
Coordinator*

Progress continues at PBCDF, other stockpile sites

Construction of the Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility is almost 90 percent complete. Exterior construction is drawing to a close. The majority of remaining work is inside the plant and includes finishing touches on electrical, piping and other systems. The plant is expected to be substantially complete in September and fully complete by the end of the year.

Officials of both PBCDF and Washington Demilitarization Co., the systems contractor, are pleased with the building's progress and quality, noting the expertise and dedication of the construction workers.

Following is a summary of activities at other stockpile locations:

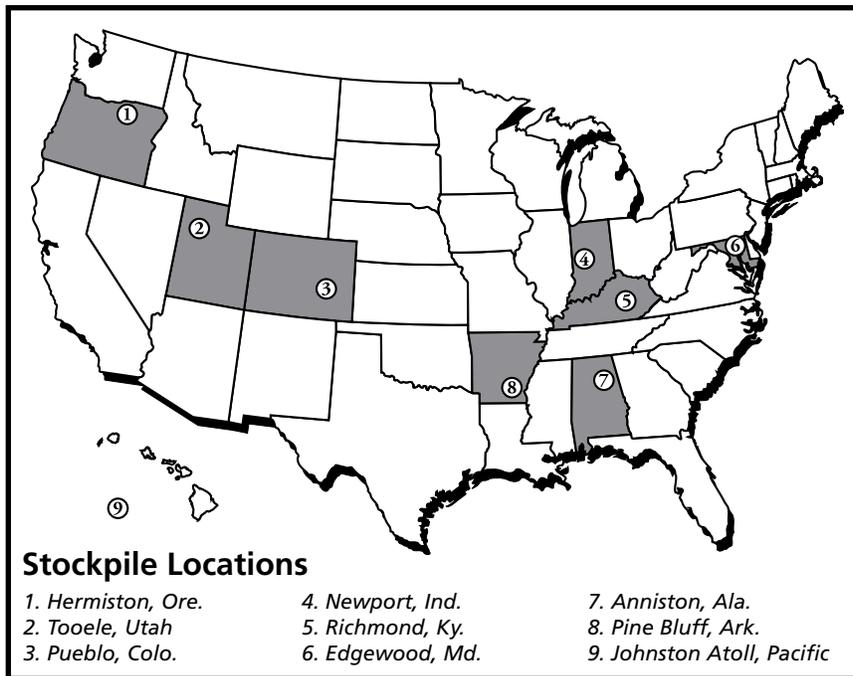
Aberdeen, Maryland and Newport, Indiana. The Army is progressing with plans to accelerate disposal of the bulk chemical agent stored in Maryland and Indiana. The accelerated neutralization process will destroy the agent nearly two years ahead of schedule. The Army continues to investigate safe and viable technologies and processes to accelerate agent destruction at the other stockpile locations.

Anniston, Alabama. Systemization, or testing, of the facility's systems and equipment is underway. Agent disposal operations are scheduled to begin in the fall.

Facility workers recently celebrated reaching 2.5 million hours without a lost-time accident.

Hermiston, Oregon. The Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility currently is undergoing systemization, with agent operations scheduled to begin in February 2003.

Johnston Island, Pacific. The JACADS team continues to proceed with closure activities. Current facility priorities include processing secondary waste in the metal parts furnace, removing excess equipment from the plant and disposing of decontamination solution in the liquid incinerator.



Pueblo, Colorado. In April, the Army released the final Environmental Impact Statement recommending neutralization as the preferred technology to destroy Pueblo Chemical Depot's mustard agent stockpile. The undersecretary of defense, who currently is reviewing the study and public input, is expected to make a final technology decision later this year.

Richmond, Kentucky. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is being prepared for public release and comment. The study will discuss how the proposed Blue Grass Chemical Weapons Disposal Facility will impact the surrounding environment. Once the study is released, a meeting will be held to provide the public the opportunity to ask questions and comment.

Tooele, Utah. The facility now is preparing to process VX nerve agent and expects to complete the disposal campaign in summer 2003.

International treaty inspectors recently certified completion of the GB disposal campaign. This accomplishment means that 77 percent of the nation's GB stockpile is eliminated, including the GB agent previously stored on Johnston Island in the Pacific Ocean.

The outreach office welcomes your questions and comments about PBCDF or any of the other stockpile sites. Give us a call!

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Meet your CAC members

The Arkansas Citizens' Advisory Commission is an independent board that serves as a vital link between the community and the Army's chemical demilitarization program. As part of a continuing series, the Pine Bluff/White Hall outreach team invites you to meet the newest CAC member, Everlyn Clay Bryant.

The Army invites you to contact the Arkansas Citizens' Advisory Commission to discuss the chemical weapons disposal program and ways you may become involved. For more information or to receive the upcoming meeting schedule, please call the CAC secretary at 501-280-4523.

Name: Everlyn Clay Bryant

Home: Pine Bluff

Appointed to CAC in: 2001

Occupation: Farmer/research associate, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Interests: "My passion is reading the Bible and other inspirational books; playing golf; eating good food; and spending time with my grandchildren."



Community Involvement & Activities: Active member of the Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County, Diplomat Committee, Membership Committee; NAACP; Black Farmers Agricultural Association; and Interested Citizens for Voter Registration, Inc.

As a CAC member, I see my role as... "A representative for the community to voice their concerns, opinions, views and fears. To keep the public involved as to the safety or dangers that may occur during the operations of the chemical demilitarization facility. Also, I see my role as advising the Army and PBCDF as to the public's concerns."