



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Trace amounts of HD mustard vapor detected today

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – Trace amounts of HD mustard chemical agent vapor were detected today inside a storage structure or “igloo” that houses bulk containers. The leaking container will be identified, inspected, repaired as necessary, and decontaminated.

There is no danger to the public or environment. The igloos have a passive filtration system that prevents chemical agent vapor from escaping outside the structures. As a further protective measure after each trace amount is discovered, a powered filtration system is activated on the igloo. The leaking container will be identified, inspected, repaired as necessary, and decontaminated.

Mustard is a blister agent that gels below 59 degrees Fahrenheit and is thawed above that temperature. As aging mustard bulk containers thaw out while they are pre-warmed inside the igloo in preparation for disposal, or in warmer months of the year, trace amounts of chemical agent may be detected. These munitions have no explosive components.

Depot officials routinely notify the public when such incidents occur. Army officials also notify off-post emergency operations centers in Umatilla and Morrow counties, Ore.; Benton County, Wash.; those in Oregon and Washington states; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

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