



Chemical Weapons Elimination

CDC's Role in Chemical Weapons Elimination and Worker Protection

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides independent oversight to the U.S. Army's chemical weapons elimination program and serves as an important element in ensuring the safe destruction of chemical warfare material for protection of public health. The team's focus is prevention with vigilance.

The CDC chemical weapons elimination team's mission is to protect public health and safety by providing oversight and guidance to the U.S. Army's chemical warfare materiel demilitarization program. We do this by reviewing, advising, and making recommendations on the Army's plans to destroy stockpile and nonstockpile chemical weapons. This mission is mandated by Public Laws 91-121, 91-441, and 99-145.

Responsibilities

The team's responsibilities for safe chemical warfare agent disposal comprise two major categories: safely dispose of chemical warfare agents and, while doing so, protect public and worker health.

Safe Disposal of Chemical Warfare Agents

- Review DoD's plans for disposing of chemical warfare agents. This review includes staffing and design specifications for system safeguards and for performance. CDC also recommends precautionary measures to avoid potential hazards and protect public health and safety.
- Ensure DoD provides adequately for public health and for worker safety when disposing of chemical warfare agents.
- Observe required readiness demonstrations before any chemical agent disposal facility begins operations.
- Review biweekly reports of air monitoring data for quality assurance.
- Conduct annual, on-site, air-monitoring equipment inspections at each operating chemical agent disposal facility.

Worker Protection

Each chemical weapons disposal facility has an elaborate cascading airflow and filtration system to protect workers.

[Engineering controls](#), air filtration, and chemical agent containment provide the main protection for workers.

Workers are also given protective clothing depending on their risk for exposures. Protective clothing includes special suits known as demilitarization protective ensembles. Other protective clothing follows recommendations from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and U.S. Army.

Protect Public Health

- Evaluate the medical program at each chemical agent disposal facility. Ensure the medical clinic, the staff, the procedures, and the plans can meet occupational medicine challenges, including emergencies related to chemical agent disposal.
- Assess the public health effects of any disposal-related, unintended exposure to a chemical warfare agent or agents.
- Work with state and local authorities to respond to public health concerns related to chemical warfare agent disposal.



- Review plans for transporting stockpiled and nonstockpiled chemical warfare agents.
- Recommend chemical warfare agent airborne exposure limits to protect the public and the workers who dispose of those chemical warfare agents.

Page last reviewed: January 6, 2014

U.S. Chemical Weapons: Nonstockpile Burial Locations (100 suspect locations in 40 states and 2 U.S. territories)