

**National Center for Environmental Health
Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services**

Elimination of Chemical Weapons

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 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.



U.S. Chemical Weapons: Nine Original Stockpile Sites

Responsibilities

The team’s roles and responsibilities in the destruction of chemical weapons fall into two major categories: destruction and community health and safety.

Destruction

- Review, advise, and make recommendations on the Army’s activities related to destroying chemical weapons, including designs and specifications for systems safeguards, systems performance, and staff proficiency.
- Ensure that the Army makes adequate provisions for public health and worker safety during the destruction of chemical weapons.
- Observe the demonstrations of readiness conducted before each facility begins actual destruction of chemical weapons.
- Once a year, inspect the air monitoring equipment at each of the five sites where the chemical weapons are now being destroyed.
- Every two weeks, review quality assurance data related to chemical agent monitoring.
- Review closure guidelines for final disposition of the operating sites.

Team Focus: Prevention With Vigilance

Continued on next page

Elimination of Chemical Weapons, Continued

Community Health and Safety

- Inspect the medical facilities, capabilities, and staff at each site to ensure they are adequate to handle emergencies or unintended situations that might occur.
- Review and advise on each site's safety and health procedures for recognizing potential hazards and handling emergency situations.
- Assess the effects on human health of any unintended release of chemical agent. To date, there has never been a release of community health significance.
- Work with state and local authorities to respond to public health concerns related to the destruction of chemical weapons.
- Review plans for transporting munitions and chemical warfare agents that have been recovered or found.
- Recommend limits of airborne exposure to chemical warfare agents that will protect the general population and the workers who destroy the agent.



U.S. Chemical Weapons: Non Stockpile Burial Locations (100 suspect locations, 40 states and 2 U.S. territories)

For More Information

Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil> to find out more about CDC's role in chemical weapons elimination.

September 2009