



CDC at Work

Disposing of Chemical Weapons Safely

From World War I to 1968, the United States produced chemical weapons as a deterrent against use of similar weapons by other countries. Though never used in battle, these U.S. weapons are now obsolete and deteriorating with age. Years ago, the Department of Defense stored these agents, either in bulk containers or as assembled munitions, at various locations within the continental United States. The Anniston, Alabama facility stored a stockpile of chemical weapons, many of which were beginning to deteriorate.

In Anniston, CDC's staff of occupational health physicians, chemical engineers, environmental engineers, and industrial hygienists consulted with the Army to ensure that chemical weapons stored at the Anniston Army base were safely destroyed. CDC worked with the Anniston community, the state of Alabama, and the Army to devise a plan for destroying these weapons safely and permanently. Specifically, CDC worked with interested parties to establish protective monitoring for the chemical agents in the workplace, in the incineration exhaust stack, and at the perim-

eter stations located around the boundaries of the destruction facility.

CDC's efforts ensured that both the workers destroying the weapons and the residents of the surrounding communities remained safe during weapons destruction. By 2008, the Anniston Chemical Agent Destruction Facility had destroyed the majority of the nerve agent munitions, which reduced the risk to nearby residents by almost 97 percent. CDC continues to participate in safety, industrial hygiene, and readiness reviews that are conducted for each chemical agent and type of munition. This is done to evaluate the Anniston facility's ability to safely operate the incineration process, maintain appropriate safeguards, and to respond to any process or medical emergencies.



Personnel loading chemical munitions on to a processing line for disassembly, treatment, and disposal.



U.S. Army personnel conducting an inspection of chemical munitions in storage.

CDC's work in Anniston is just one example of how CDC's Chemical Weapons Elimination program assists the U.S. Army by providing technical assistance in the safe handling and destruction of outdated chemical weapons at all U.S. stockpile disposal facilities. Today, with support from CDC's public health experts, the U.S. Army is recognized as a world leader in international chemical weapons elimination efforts. Over a decade of experience has demonstrated that these weapons can be destroyed safely, without harm to employees, to the community, or to the environment.

For more information about CDC at Work, please contact us at (202) 245-0600 or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/washington/>.

