



U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS ACTIVITY

MONTHLY UPDATE

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DESERET CHEMICAL DEPOT | Oct. 18, 2012



A rangeland seed drill is used to reseed more than 600 acres of depot property that was burned by a fire in June. The depot rented the drill, which is owned by the Shambip Soil Conservation District, Grantsville Soil Conservation District and Tooele County.

Reseeding scorched land

Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD) has nearly completed reseeding more than 600 acres of depot land that was charred by a fire in June. In an effort to establish more native grasses rather than cheat-grass, the depot used a special mixture of six different seeds.

"This mixture is designed for sagebrush steppe habitat and should establish quickly in arid conditions," explained Boyd White, DCD Natural Resource Manager. "Even though the sage brush was burned off in the fire, there are still seeds in the soil that will also re-establish over time."

If nature was left to take its course, the burn scar would most likely become a field of cheat-grass. Cheatgrass is very invasive; it produces a high-volume of seeds and it only takes a few plants to produce enough seeds to dominate the native grasses. More importantly, cheatgrass dries out early in the hot summer months, serving as a fuel for mid-summer fires.

"Once cheatgrass is established, it is very difficult and expensive to remove and replace with desirable plant species," White said.

The fire also burned an additional 1,000 acres

of land outside of the depot. The Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) owns this property and plans to reseed the burned area by airplane in November.

Prior to reseeding, a pre-emergent herbicide called Plateau was applied to the soil. This specific herbicide targets annual weeds, especially cheat-grass, allowing other species to grow and establish without competition.

"It will take a few years to see the difference," White noted. "Once established, the fields will be great pastures for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat."

From agency to activity

CMA gets new name

Now that the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) has completed their chemical stockpile elimination mission, they have received a new name—the Chemical Materials Activity (CMA).

CMA was re-designated as a Separate Reporting Activity (SRA) from a Major Subordinate Command (MSC) under the U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC). There are no discernible differences, as CMA will still report to AMC, but through different channels.

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Monday - Friday
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“Star” status retained

Last month, URS and its lab and monitoring sub-contractor, Battelle received official notification from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) that they have met the requirements to retain their OSHA Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) “Star” status.

Star status is the top safety accolade that a workplace can obtain through the VPP, which is an OSHA cooperative program that evaluates and acknowledges employers and workers for demonstrating excellent industrial safety and health cultures.

Back in June, the TOCDF underwent a four-day-long audit by a team of OSHA inspectors, which is required every three years to determine if the worksite is eligible for the VPP recertification. The OSHA evaluation team conducted a comprehensive facility inspection and completed a thorough review of new or changed processes.

“The inspectors look not only for areas where we aren’t meeting the mark, but they also take note of improvement recommendations they have for us, as well as recognizing positive practices that they observe during the inspection,” explained TOCDF Health and Safety Manager Paul Andersen.

At the conclusion of the audit, TOCDF received 19 positive remarks, highlighting TOCDF for six “best practices,” including TOCDF’s Emergency Response and Occupational Medicine programs. These best practices represent areas where TOCDF has the very best performance in the entire OSHA region, a six-state area. In addition, the audit team had 18 recommendations for improvement, two of which were required improvements.

“We have implemented all of the recommendations and corrected the two requirements,” Andersen stated. “The first correction was to ensure that we (See VPP STAR on page 3)

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Troy Johnson (pointing), Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD) Environmental Manager, talks about the depot’s Solid Waste Management Units (SWMUs) 1 and 25 with Army personnel, including DCD Commander Col. Mark Pomeroy (on right) and the commander of the Tooele Army Depot (TEAD), Col. Christopher Mohan (on left). The SWMUs are areas that were used more than 30 years ago to dispose of chemical and conventional weapons along with other various industrial wastes. SWMUs 1 and 25 are DCD’s largest and most heavily contaminated areas and their cleanup will go beyond July 11, 2013, when DCD is officially transferred to TEAD. DCD has successfully remediated 17 of its 29 identified SWMUs; work is currently underway or soon will be on the remaining 12 SWMUs.

VPP star

(continued from front page)

record our monthly fire extinguisher inspections locally at each extinguisher since our electronic tracking system showed some errors during the audit. The second was to reconfigure our laboratory door access control system to meet the Life Safety Code, which is a standard established by the National Fire Protection Association," Andersen further explained.

"To the credit of our outstanding workforce, we have successfully maintained our Star status since 2009," noted Andersen. "Retaining VPP Star status is an achievement that was at least as challenging as the first time. It was something our employees work hard for and something we took seriously."

In between the three-year recertification process, TOCDF is required to submit annual detailed self-evaluations to OSHA to prove that the site continues performing their best health and safety programs. TOCDF has taken a unique approach to this annual process through the VPP Element Owner Program. This program consists of a yearly coordination of 18 employee teams, each chartered to look self-critically at specific aspects of safety and health with an expectation that continuous improvement can't ever stop.



In a recent photo (above), Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility workers form the letters VPP, promoting their commitment to health and safety as they prepared for the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) site inspection. In September 2009 (below), a human star was formed in the parking lot as a way of promoting that it's the people who make the strong health and safety culture possible (URS photos).



Early retirement and separation incentive opportunities

With Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD) closure just around the corner, DCD employees are taking advantage of early retirement and separation incentive programs. The U.S. Army's Chemical Materials Activity opened up an 11-day window in early October for DCD employees to apply for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)/Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP). The VERA/VSIP is an effort to help reduce the amount of involuntary separations during next year's closure Reduction in Force (RIF), scheduled for July.

DCD currently has a workforce of 170; of which 56 applied for the VERA/VSIP. The applications go

through a three-step review and approval process to determine if each applicant meets the retirement eligibility criteria, which is based off of age and years of service.

Assuming that all 56 applications are approved, DCD has the ability to fulfill all the approved VERA/VSIP applications. These employees will be released between now and July 2013, based off of mission requirements.

Some employees, either by choice or because they are not retirement eligible, have the option to apply for the Priority Placement Program (PPP) in November. The PPP is a Federal government career transition assistance program that allows employees to receive hiring preferences for Department of Defense job vacancies.

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