

Depot remembers WWII accident



Depot commander Lt. Col. Bob Stein addresses the audience at Thursday's commemoration of the 1944 explosion that killed six civilian workers.

Sixty-five years ago – on March 21, 1944 – an igloo exploded on the Umatilla Ordnance Depot, killing six civilian workers. The event provides a lasting reminder that we are involved in dangerous work and that safety must always guide the program.

Lt. Col. Bob Stein, commander of the Umatilla Chemical Depot, commemorated the event at the site of the explosion on Thursday afternoon. Relatives of those killed were the honored guests.

Construction of the Umatilla Ordnance Depot began in January 1941. Ten months later the facility was dedicated, and World War II began just six weeks afterward.

The depot was busy delivering munitions as part of the war effort. The swing shift crew of eight started at 4 p.m. Their task was to move conventional 500-pound bombs into Igloo B-1014. The loading operation was almost complete when, at 9:29 p.m., the igloo and 264 500-pound bombs exploded. The sound of the blast was heard as far as Pendleton. Window panes were broken up to 25 miles away. The ground under the igloo remained warm for three days. An accident investigation did not reveal the exact cause of the incident.

Lt. Col. Stein told the crowd at the commemoration that while the depot's mission is nearing completion, "we must always remain acutely aware of the need for safety. If we continue to watch out for ourselves and for each other, we can safely complete the upcoming mustard agent disposal campaign ... There will be distractions, such as upcoming closure of the depot, but we must remain focused, diligent, and vigilant. That is how we honor our depot colleagues from across the generations. And that's how we protect you, the community we serve."

UMCDF Highlights

- It has been 991 days, or more than 4.5 million work hours, since a lost-time accident occurred at the UMCDF (July 7, 2006).

Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility Processing

(March 18-24, 2009)

Total number of VX-filled land mines destroyed this period	
Total VX land mines destroyed to date	11,685
Percentage of VX land mines destroyed to date	100
Pounds of VX agent destroyed this period	0
Pounds of total VX agent destroyed to date	734,262
Total munitions destroyed to date since start of operations (Sept. 7, 2004) <i>including non-stockpile GB and VX ton containers</i>	217,969
Nominal tons of chemical agent destroyed to date	1,377.86
Percentage of total agent tons destroyed	37.07

UMCD/UMCDF Milestones

- **Nov. 5, 2008:** Last VX mines destroyed in the Deactivation Furnace System (DFS).
- **Nov. 4, 2008:** Last VX mines transported from depot storage to disposal plant.
- **Sept. 25, 2008:** First VX mines transported from depot storage to disposal plant and destroyed in the(DFS).
- **Aug. 6, 2008:** Completed VX 8-inch projectile campaign.
- **July 16, 2008:** Processed first VX 8-inch projectile in the Metal Parts Furnace (MPF).
- **July 15, 2008:** First VX 8-inch projectiles transported from depot storage to disposal plant.
- **June 27, 2008:** Completed VX 155mm projectile campaign.
- **March 21, 2008:** Destroyed first VX 155mm projectile in the MPF.
- **March 20, 2008:** First VX 155mm projectiles transported from depot storage to disposal plant.
- **Jan. 23, 2008:** Completed VX rocket campaign.
- **Dec. 24, 2007:** Completed VX spray tank campaign.
- **Nov. 26, 2007:** Processed the non-stockpile VX ton container.
- **Nov. 23, 2007:** Destroyed the first VX spray tanks in the MPF.
- **Nov. 19, 2007:** First VX spray tank transported from depot storage to disposal plant.
- **Nov. 9, 2007:** First VX chemical agent destroyed in the Liquid Incinerator (LIC).
- **Oct. 29, 2007:** Processed the first VX M55 rockets in the DFS.
- **Oct. 26, 2007:** First VX M55 rockets transported from depot storage to disposal plant.
- **July 8, 2007:** Completed GB munitions campaign.

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