



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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8:45 a.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Public Affairs Office
Jim Hackett, (541) 564-5418/5312

Chemical Materials Agency Director to speak at March 18 ceremony

Umatilla Chemical Depot, Hermiston, Ore. – Conrad Whyne, director of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency, Aberdeen, Md., will be the guest speaker at a ceremony Thursday, March 18, honoring six workers who died in a 1944 igloo explosion at the Umatilla Chemical Depot.

As CMA Director, Whyne is responsible for ensuring the secure storage and safe destruction of chemical weapons at UMCD and other sites across the country.

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. in Bldg. 54 and end at the site of the explosion. The public is invited.

This is the third commemoration held in the past three years and this year's ceremony marks the 66th anniversary of the March 21, 1944, igloo explosion in which six civilian depot workers died. The event also stands as the only fatal munitions handling accident in the depot's history since its opening on the eve of World War II.

"This tragic accident is a significant part of the local area, the depot and the Army's history. I feel it is very important that we honor these six depot workers who gave their lives in support of our country during World War II. It is not only important that we honor them today, but we continue to honor them following depot closure with ceremonies such as this," said Lt. Col. Kris Perkins, depot commander.

In the 1944 accident, a depot storage igloo, B-1014, containing 264 500-pound conventional bombs, was completely destroyed. Killed in the accident were: Kenneth LeRoy Fraser, foreman; Lance Stultz, lift truck operator; William Sanders, munitions handler; Harry Dwight Sever, munitions handler; Hiram Cook, truck driver; and Alice Wolgamott, junior laborer. Two crew members working on a nearby railroad pier survived – Glenn P. Long, foreman, and Cecil Pennington, foreman. An extensive Army investigation was unable to determine the specific cause of the accident.

Interested World War II-era depot workers or their family members should provide their names as soon as possible to the Umatilla Chemical Disposal Outreach Office in Hermiston at (541) 564-9339. This information will be used to permit access to the depot.

Bus transportation will be provided from the depot main gate to the accident site. Ceremony guests should bring warm clothing.

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Note to Media: Those interested in covering the ceremony March 18 should contact Jim Hackett at (541) 564-5418/5312 by today, March 11 or by e-mail, james.s.hackett@us.army.mil .Please contact the Chemical Weapons Disposal Outreach Office at (541) 564-9339 after March 14 for further information. Photography will be allowed within certain security requirements.

www.cma.army.mil

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