



Military Corner

Edgewood Arsenal Chemical Warfare Center

The Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, was one of nine Army installations in the United States that stored chemical agent. The Army worked in partnership with state and local government agencies, as well as federal agencies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to safeguard the local community and protect the environment during storage and disposal of the chemical agent.

The Aberdeen Proving Ground was established in 1917 as the Army's primary research and development center for munitions and equipment. The Edgewood Arsenal, then a separate Army installation, became the center for production and research in chemical warfare. The arsenal became the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground in 1971, when the installations merged.

Since 1941, the Army safely stored approximately five percent of the nation's original chemical agent in steel ton containers, at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground. Construction of the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ABCDF) was completed in 2002. Agent destruction operations began in April 2003 and were completed in February 2006. ABCDF's permit was officially closed in June 2007.

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Army accelerated the neutralization schedule for the agent stored at the Edgewood Area. The Army worked with state regulators, local and national elected officials, and other partners in implementing the accelerated neutralization plan.

Aberdeen stockpile consisted of chemical agent HG—mustard blister agent. During agent operations, ABCDF used a chemical neutralization process to break down the chemical agent mustard. The Army also used the same technology at its Newport Chemical Agent Disposal Facility in Newport, IN.

From 1955 to 1975, the U.S. Army Chemical Corps conducted classified medical studies at Edgewood Arsenal. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of low-dose chemical warfare agents on military personnel and to test protective clothing, pharmaceuticals, and vaccines. About 7,000 soldiers took part in these experiments that involved exposures to more than 250 different chemicals, according to the Department of Defense. Some of the volunteers exhibited symptoms at the time of exposure to these agents but long-term follow-up was not planned as part of the DoD studies. *[That's nice!]*

The chemical agents tested included chemical warfare agents and other related agents.

[<http://www.cma.army.mil/edgewood.aspx>]

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgewood_Arsenal_experiments]

