



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

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BROKEN AFTERBURNER BOLTS CURTAIL ANCDF WORK

ANNISTON ARMY DEPOT, ANNISTON, Ala. – The planned maintenance work at the Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ANCDF) has been curtailed following a structural problem with an afterburner here yesterday.

Sections of the afterburner for the deactivation furnace at the ANCDF separated late yesterday. Seventy-two large bolts used to hold the multiple sections of the afterburner together broke while it was being heated. Each section is designed and constructed with special refractory, or fire brick. The afterburner was at 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit and safely ramping up to an operating temperature of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit following maintenance when the bolts broke.

The event did not pose any risk to the community. The afterburner was not exposed to any nerve agent. In addition, there was no presence of agent in areas of the ANCDF that were involved in the handling and the demilitarization of nerve agent GB-filled munitions because those areas have been thoroughly decontaminated.

There were no chemical storage or disposal operations taking place at the time of the event.

The deactivation furnace is one of three main furnaces used during disposal operations of the Anniston chemical munition stockpile. The deactivation furnace was designed to destroy M55 rockets after they have been cut into eight pieces and the explosive components of other munitions.

The metal parts furnace and the liquid incinerator are the other two main furnaces used at the ANCDF. Additional afterburners are used in tandem with the metal parts furnace and the liquid incinerator.

(More)



For more information,
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Yesterday's problem was isolated to the deactivation furnace afterburner. The other two ANCDF furnaces and their associated afterburners were not involved.

"The deactivation furnace afterburner was recently rebricked by experienced masons as part of the planned maintenance activities. We were going through a methodical and planned reheating of the afterburner and the new brick when the two sections separated," said Timothy K. Garrett, government site project manager.

There was no explosion in the afterburner. The afterburner did not fall to the ground. However, a small number of the new fire brick did fall to the ground below the afterburner after the sections separated.

Even though there was no facility fire, some wooden planks on nearby scaffolding did smolder. The Anniston Army Depot fire department did report to the ANCDF and extinguished the smoldering scaffolding.

No one was injured. There were no chemical munitions at the ANCDF.

ANCDF maintenance work began early in March when the last nerve agent GB-filled munition was safely demilitarized. The current maintenance work, locally referred to as agent change over, is supporting the transition of plant operations from processing GB munitions to demilitarizing VX-filled M55 rockets.

Site officials had been planning to resume chemical weapons disposal operations in early July. A thorough assessment of the problems with the afterburner will determine what affect yesterday's problem may have on ANCDF operations.

"We will determine what happened and then we will determine what needs to be done to fix the equipment," said Garrett.

"We are reviewing the reason the two sections of the afterburner slipped to prevent a similar incident in the future. We have stopped all actions until we determine the cause and the best solution. There was no agent in the facility at the time because we are in an agent changeover. We will continue to ensure the safety of our workers, the environment and the community as we did during the GB campaign," said Robert C. Love, Westinghouse Anniston project manager.

(More)



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“The afterburner has four sections that are joined at flanges, the afterburner separated at one of the flanges and the second and third section slipped approximately five feet then coming to rest on structural steel. No one was injured. We will tackle this effort safely as we have the safe destruction of the chemical weapons stored at Anniston Army Depot. Rest assured we will proceed safely,” Ken Ankrom, ANCDF plant manager said.

Site managers and engineers have already begun a thorough review of the equipment and the circumstances surrounding last night’s event. They say it is too early to speculate on how long an evaluation may take.

The demilitarization of GB munitions began at the ANCDF on Aug. 9, 2003 with the disposal of two M55 GB rockets. The last of the 142,428 GB munitions was safely demilitarized on March 2.

During the GB disposal campaign, ANCDF workers destroyed 42,762 M55 rockets and warheads; 16,026 8-inch projectiles; 9,600 155mm projectiles; 74,040 105mm projectiles; as well two ton containers and 36 vials of nonstockpile GB materiel. In addition, 96,246 gallons of nerve agent will have been incinerated during the campaign.

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The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) is a dedicated team whose expertise and oversight sets the standards of excellence and leadership in safely storing the nation's aging chemical weapons and developing programs aimed at effectively recovering, treating and ultimately eliminating the nation's chemical warfare materiel. CMA personnel also enhance national security by providing specialized products and capabilities to our nation's Warfighters, and homeland defense and response capabilities. CMA encourages public participation and is committed to worker and public safety, and environmental stewardship. For more information about CMA and its programs, visit www.cma.army.mil.