

# Chemical munitions clean-up at Depot to start in May

BY MICHAEL PAULK

Disposal will begin soon to rid the former Defense Distribution Depot in Memphis of chemical munitions buried in an undeveloped portion of the compound, a move that could free another portion of the facility for future use by private business.

The operations to remove the chemicals from the former U.S. Army facility will be based mainly in a tent erected by the Huntsville, Ala.-based U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center and its contractors located in an area known as Dunn Field, says Jackie Noble, command affairs officer with the Defense Distribution Center's Office of Command Affairs.

The removal team completed a full-scale pre-operational simulation of the removal April 18-2, and could possibly begin the actual work as early as May 1, says Alma Black Moore, community spokesman for the project.

Although the chemicals pose no known danger to the public, the removal of the materials is necessary

so that Dunn Field can be redeveloped by future tenants or owners without restrictions.

The work was originally set to begin April 1, but has been pushed back as the removal team has prepared the area and taken precautions to attempt to ensure public safety. Work is scheduled to run through July.

The Depot, which was operated by the Defense Department from 1942 to 1997 as a distribution center for the military, became the final resting place for some World War II-era mustard gas containers and kits used by the armed forces to identify chemical agents.

The chemicals were drained into a pit located in an 80-acre area on Dunn Field, neutralized, burned and buried during the late 1940s.

The tent that will be used during the cleanup is a vapor containment structure that will house any materials unearthed during the excavation of the area and enable the removal team to closely monitor and filter the air.

During the length of the chemical removal operation at Dunn Field, officials will hold public briefings each Wednesday at 10 a.m. in a tent near Gate 15 between Hays and Perry roads, Noble says.

Although the area is a part of the same facility that houses the Memphis Depot Business Park, the cleanup efforts won't effect the marketing

endeavors of Defense Depot Redevelopment Corp. of Memphis and Shelby County, says Jim Covington, the organization's president.

The Redevelopment Corp. is only concerned with marketing approximately 600 acres of the main campus that hosts the warehousing structures built by the military, and most likely will not be involved with the other parcel after it has been cleaned.

"We're never going to have Dunn Field," he says. "We decided on the front end that it would take them too long to finish and that they could just keep it. I think eventually it could be sold at auction."

Officials from the DDC, a field unit of the Defense Logistics Agency, the group that oversees the Depot until the Redevelopment Corp. takes possession of it, say that is the most likely scenario. But it is unclear if it will be sold as a whole or in parcels.

The DDC operates 24 distribution depots throughout the United States and Europe, storing 4.3 million stock numbers in 500 million square feet of storage space.

Covington and his group have had success in proving that private business can find a home in the 20 existing World War II-era buildings at the former military installation in the two years they have been active.

In that time, the Redevelopment Corp. has been able to attract 12 ten-

ants to what is now been renamed the Memphis Depot Business Park and filled more than 1 million square feet of warehouse space.

The park's tenant list includes: Pearson, Ga.-based Cady Industries, Inc., which took 113,000 square feet to consolidate its Memphis and Millington plants in November 1999; Newark, Del.-based Livingston Healthcare Services, Inc., occupies a 206,000-square-foot facility at the Depot to house a third-party logistics service for pharmaceutical companies; Stamford, Conn.-based EveryCD, Inc., which took 43,500 square feet with an option to expand into 100,000 square feet to serve its 3-year-old operation that sells entertainment-related products such as CDs, videos and DVDs through its Internet Web site [www.everycd.com](http://www.everycd.com).

The Depot landed its first and largest tenant, Memphis-based McAuley's, Inc., in November 1997. The manufacturer and distributor of scented home products operates in 470,000 square feet.

The Redevelopment Corp., formed by local governments, has been transforming the Depot into an industrial park with the hopes of taking ownership of the property from the Army within the year.

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