



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Low-Level of Lewisite Again Detected During Rocky Mountain Arsenal Lime Basins Project

Work on the Project is Temporarily Suspended; Refuge Remains Closed

Today, cleanup experts at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal confirmed a low-level detection of Lewisite through air monitoring results while installing groundwater monitoring wells at the Lime Basins cleanup project.

Following protocol, as soon as the Lewisite was detected, work on the project was immediately suspended. Due to the history and former use of the site, experts working on the cleanup project were appropriately trained, prepared and were wearing protective equipment including Tyvek suits and respirators with supplied air in case Lewisite or other chemicals were detected. Air monitoring samples at the project's perimeter are negative, the project site remains secured and regulatory officials have been notified. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge remains closed.

"This is a very low-level detection and consistent with our plan we expect to be back to work tomorrow after analyzing additional air monitoring samples," said U.S. Army Program Manager Charlie Scharmann. "We will continue to follow our strict safety protocols and procedures, while coordinating with the regulatory agencies to safely complete the project."

The air monitoring detection is not a surprise, as Lewisite was detected at the project site on Oct. 31, 2007. The Lime Basins cleanup project is a five-acre site located in a restricted area of the Arsenal within the central portion of the site. Since the project began in mid October, air monitoring samples at the project's perimeter showed no Lewisite.

Originally constructed in 1942, the Lime Basins were designed to receive wastewater from the production of chemical warfare materials, including Lewisite. The wastewater was treated with lime to neutralize the waste. Lewisite was produced at the Arsenal from April to November 1943.

Community members with questions about the ongoing cleanup of the Arsenal are encouraged to contact the site's Community Information Line at [303-289-0136](tel:303-289-0136) or the Tri-County Health Department's Rocky Mountain Arsenal Information Line at [303-286-8032](tel:303-286-8032). Information is also available at www.rma.army.mil.

Site History

Currently, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal is more than 80 percent complete with its ongoing, extensive environmental cleanup of the site's soil and structures. Groundwater cleanup is expected to continue after the land area cleanup is complete. Most of the remaining cleanup work involves clean construction, which means moving clean soils and materials to build covers over the landfills and consolidation areas. For almost a decade, the Arsenal has repeatedly been honored as one of the nation's safest places to work by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Cleanup plans were developed and approved by the U.S. Army, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Shell Oil Co., Tri-County Health Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Once the remainder of the cleanup is complete, the Arsenal's vast open spaces will constitute one of the nation's largest urban wildlife refuges. By fall 2006, more than 12,000 acres of Arsenal land had been transferred from the U.S. Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, officially establishing and later expanding the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. After the Arsenal's remaining cleanup projects are completed and areas removed from the EPA's National Priorities List, the Army will transfer about 2,500 acres to the Service to further expand the Refuge. By 2010, the cleanup program will be finished and the Army will retain approximately 1,100 acres to maintain its landfills and groundwater treatment plants.

The Refuge now provides environmental education and interpretive programs, catch-and-release recreational fishing, close to nine miles of trails, wildlife viewing opportunities and site tours for the public, and is a sanctuary for more than 330 species of animals, including wild bison, deer, coyotes, bald eagles and burrowing owls.

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