

Camp Minden Questions and Answers

Describe the situation at Camp Minden in Webster Parish, Louisiana

Over 15 million pounds of deteriorating M6 propellant and about 320,000 pounds of clean burning igniters could self-ignite causing a catastrophic explosion as they become more unstable. Explo Systems, Inc. failed to recycle the materials and improperly stored materials exposed to weather which hastened the decomposition of the stabilizing material in the propellant. Explo Systems, Inc. filed bankruptcy and abandoned the material at Camp Minden in Webster Parish.

How dangerous are current conditions at Camp Minden?

The Department of Army Explosive Safety Board experts found materials to be in a severely deteriorated state and warned of potential self-ignition risk as soon as August 2015. The deteriorated M6 propellant and clean burning igniters have been moved into buildings to protect them from the weather in an effort to slow decomposition of the stabilizing material in the propellant.

What is M6 propellant

The largest amount of material remaining to be disposed of at Camp Minden is M6 propellant. M6 is composed mainly (87%) of nitrocellulose which is a flammable solid. M6 also contains 10% dinitrotoluene which is used in the production of explosives as a gelatinizing and waterproofing agent. The remaining 3% is mainly dibutyl phthalate which is typically used to help make plastics soft with a small fraction of diphenylamine. M6 burns at over 5000 degree Fahrenheit and results in small amounts residual material remaining in the burn pan along with the air emissions released from the burn.

Is the material/propellant starting to degrade?

The Army Explosives Safety Board advised that deterioration of M6 propellant could greatly increase the risk of explosion by August 2015.

What happens if the material self-ignites?

An uncontrolled catastrophic explosion would occur should the M6 propellant and clean burning igniters self-ignite at Camp Minden in Webster Parish. In 2012, a portion of the material self-ignited and exploded causing damage in the surrounding area.

How is the dangerous situation at Camp Minden being addressed?

The abandoned materials containers are being visually inspected for signs of deterioration and spills. Several containers of other chemicals also abandoned at Camp Minden that had not

deteriorated and could be removed for disposal have been removed under a federal order. In December 2014, the U.S. Army Explosive Safety Board experts completed another inspection of the material and reiterated its concerns about the deteriorating stability of the M6 propellant.

Why is the material being destroyed at Camp Minden?

Camp Minden is a large facility and is almost 15,000 acres in size. The size of the property and location provides for a large buffer zone and additional safety exclusion zone between the burn area and the facility boundary which is over 1 mile away. The abandoned material has severely deteriorated and off-site transportation for permanent destruction is too dangerous.

Why was the open burning with burn tray chosen?

The remedy is established in the Administrative Settlement Agreement and Compliance Order based on expert advice from DOD. The decision to use the destruction by burning method for the disposal of the propellant at Camp Minden considered several factors. Many technologies were evaluated. The safety of the public is and always has been the most important consideration. The Army's Explosive Safety Board stated that after August 2015, the stability of the M6 propellant would be significantly reduced. That could lead to another explosion. The Army's manuals as well as the Army's Explosive Safety Board stipulate open burning is the only practical method for propellant in the condition found at Camp Minden.

The technology had to be protective, effective, timely, proven, available, and able to be implemented prior to August 2015 due to safety concerns.

How long will the controlled open burn with burn trays take to complete?

The removal of approximately 15 million pounds of M6 propellant is expected to take about 1 year to burn.

Will there be a residue after the propellant burns?

Yes. The contractor selected by Louisiana Army National Guard will be responsible for collecting residue and sampling it to determine the appropriate disposal method.

Is controlled open burning on metal trays of this material protective?

Controlled open burning on metal trays elevated from an impermeable pad has been shown to be safe. A dry even layer of the propellant along the tray promotes sound combustion. Based on emission studies contained in the administrative record, less than 250 pounds of unburned hydrocarbons would be emitted from the combustion of all 15 million pounds of M6. Lips on the trays diminish the likelihood of sparks from the tray from falling on the impervious pad. The protocols for monitoring the burns contained in the request for proposals include emission standards for all expected contaminants [including dinitrotolulene], before and after

sampling of trays and pads, ambient monitoring, collection and testing of any ash to characterize proper disposal techniques. EPA and LDEQ will independently monitor the disposal.

What measures are in place to ensure the disposal method is protective of human health and the environment?

The remedy selected is protective of human health and the environment. Air, water, and soil will be tested before, during, and after the propellant burning to prevent any impacts to the community or the environment. Due to the “clean-burn” of this material, impacts to the air within the burn area will be minimal outside the exclusion zone. EPA and LDEQ will work with the Louisiana Army National Guard and their contractors to monitor and minimize environmental/public impact throughout the disposal process and will keep the public informed.

Who will award the contract?

Under the AOC signed by all parties, the Louisiana Army National Guard published their Request for Proposals on December 9, 2014. Louisiana Army National Guard will evaluate the proposals and select a contractor.

How much will it cost to address the explosive materials located at Camp Minden?

Cost will be defined by the contract solicitation and will also include EPA oversight costs.

When will a contractor be selected by the Louisiana National Guard to destroy the materials at Camp Minden?

The Louisiana National Guard Request for Proposal closed on January 21, 2015.

What happens after the Louisiana National Guard awards the contract to destroy the material at Camp Minden?

The bids will be reviewed prior to any award. The Louisiana National Guard Request for Proposal and Statement of Work requires the contractor to meet certain requirements to demonstrate the protectiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of the equipment.

Does the contractor have to conduct additional testing of the controlled open burning with burn trays?

The Louisiana National Guard Request for Proposal and Statement of Work requires the contractor to conduct a series of test/trial burns at the actual site of the burning to determine the amount of M6 that can be safely burned in each burn tray, to verify air modeling results and validate the design and deployment or air monitoring to assure that there will not be air quality

impacts. These and all tests will be conducted in a protective manner.

Who will monitor the contractors work to ensure protectiveness?

The EPA will oversee the Louisiana National Guard's activities regarding air monitoring to assure that activities are conducted within the appropriate standards.

Who will monitor the contractors work to ensure effectiveness and efficiency?

The Louisiana National Guard will oversee the contractors activities regarding disposal of the deteriorating materials at Camp Minden.

What is the next step to permanently address the dangerous situation at Camp Minden?

On October 28, 2014, EPA signed an agreement with the Louisiana Military Department (Louisiana National Guard), U.S. Department of the Army, and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. This agreement became final on November 4, 2014, and outlined the responsibilities of the various parties and required environmental monitoring and testing. Several disposal approaches were considered. The agreement is a public document and located at the local library and on our website at www.epa.gov/region6.

What is the web address for the Camp Minden website?

Here is the link to the Camp Minden website: www2.epa.gov/la/camp-minden