

PROPOSED INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF
EXPLOSIVE DESTRUCTION SYSTEM AND
EXPLOSIVE DESTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY AT THE
PUEBLO CHEMICAL DEPOT, PUEBLO, COLORADO
DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROPOSED ACTION

The Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) currently stores a stockpile of munitions consisting of mustard agent (types HD and HT) contained in 155mm and 105mm artillery projectiles and 4.2-inch mortar rounds. PCD currently stores 2,611 tons of chemical agent in igloos that are monitored through an ongoing inspection program.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) requires complete destruction of the entire stockpile by 2012. However, based on the existing schedule, PCD will not be able to meet this timeline. U.S. Public Law (PL) 110-116 (Defense Appropriations Act for FY 2008) requires the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile no later than 2017. The current plan to accomplish the demilitarization of the stockpile at PCD consists of utilizing the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP).

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has directed the U.S. Army Element Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (USAE ACWA) to investigate actions to close the operational gap between currently operating chemical weapons demilitarization facilities at other stockpile locations (projected to complete operations in 2012) and the initiation of demilitarization operations at PCD.

The U.S. Army is considering installation and operation of a mobile treatment unit known as the Explosive Destruction System (EDS) and/or a second system employing an Explosive Destruction Technology (EDT) to maintain continuity of U.S. chemical weapons destruction operations and facilitate complete destruction of the PCD stockpile by 2017. The near-term approach will focus on treating overpacked munitions currently in storage at PCD and palletized munitions. These systems were selected to treat stockpiled munitions and to take advantage of the particular capabilities of transportable systems.

REASON FOR PREPARING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

The Army's implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulation, Title 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 651 paragraph 33 requires an EA to be prepared whenever a project involves the construction and operation of a major new fixed facility. Destruction of the PCD stockpiled chemical agent munitions was addressed in previous Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documentation as described below.

SUMMARY OF NEPA DOCUMENTATION

In 2002, the U.S. Army published a site-specific Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) assessing the destruction of chemical agent munitions stored at PCD and

concluded that PCAPP was the preferred alternative for the destruction of PCD chemical weapons stockpile.

Several previous assessments addressing this action were reviewed and referenced in preparation of this Environmental Assessment (EA), including the following:

- *Proposed Installation and Operation of an Explosive Destruction Technology at the Anniston Army Depot, Anniston, Alabama: Environmental Assessment, 2009*
- *Proposed Installation and Operation of the Pine Bluff Explosive Destruction System (PBEDS) at Pine Bluff Arsenal, Arkansas: Environmental Assessment, 2004*
- *Design, Construction, and Operation of One or More Pilot Test Facilities for Assembled Chemical Weapons Destruction Technologies at One or More Sites: Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2002*
- *Destruction of Chemical Munitions at Pueblo Chemical Depot, Colorado: Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2002.*

This EA has been prepared by the Army in compliance with NEPA and 32 CFR Part 651 to determine whether significant impacts to the environment are likely to result from the construction and operation of an EDS and/or EDT at PCD.

DETERMINATION

Destruction of the mustard-filled munitions stored at PCD has been addressed in previous environmental reviews. The 2002 Pueblo FEIS concluded that the PCD chemical agent munitions stockpile can be destroyed in a safe and environmentally acceptable manner and that the preferred alternative was onsite treatment. The installation and operation of the EDS and/or EDT to treat a portion of the PCD chemical agent munitions stockpile would create no significant environmental impacts.

I have determined that in accordance with the Army's implementing NEPA regulations and in consideration of the EA prepared by subject-matter experts that no significant impacts would result from the proposed action. There is no significant increase of impact to the environment when compared to the current mission of the PCAPP and PCD.

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