



Blue Grass Chemical Agent-
Destruction Pilot Plant

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Blue Grass Plant Completes First Munitions Destruction Campaign

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RICHMOND, Ky. – The [Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant](#) (BGCAPP) destroyed all 8-inch projectiles containing [GB nerve agent](#) May 11. This marks the completion of the first munitions campaign for the project.

“I am so proud of the team for reaching this destruction milestone,” said Dr. Candace Coyle, BGCAPP site project manager. “This is not just a completion of a campaign, but it marks the complete destruction of a type of chemical weapon from the U.S. stockpile.”

[Nerve agent destruction operations began](#) at the plant, located on the [Blue Grass Army Depot](#) (BGAD), Jan. 17. Under the observation of trained operators, automated equipment disassembled nearly 4,000 munitions and drained the chemical agent. The agent was neutralized by mixing it with water and caustic to produce hydrolysate. After the agent was confirmed destroyed by laboratory analysts, the hydrolysate was pumped to holding tanks to await the [supercritical water oxidation](#) process. Remaining metal parts from the munitions were thermally heated to more than 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit and sent for recycling.

“Our team safely completed this campaign ahead of schedule, even during a pandemic,” said Ron Hink, [Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass](#) (BPBG) project manager. “From here, the men and women of BGCAPP will turn their attention to making equipment adjustments to begin the next munitions campaign.”

Throughout the campaign, BGCAPP personnel coordinated with the Blue Grass Chemical Activity (BGCA) on transportation of the projectiles to the plant. This organization’s mission is the safe and secure storage of the chemical weapons stockpile until demilitarization is complete.

“BGCA and BGCAPP have worked closely together to ensure the safe delivery of all GB projectiles to the demilitarization plant,” said Lt. Col. Rodney McCutcheon, BGCA commander. “We plan together, train together and execute the mission together. This historic milestone is a direct reflection of the hard work, dedication and professionalism of our teams coming together resulting in mission accomplishment.”

The 8-inch projectiles contained a total of more than 28 tons of chemical agent. The stockpile at BGAD originally consisted of approximately 523 tons of chemical agent configured in 155mm projectiles containing mustard and VX nerve agent, 8-inch projectiles containing GB nerve agent, and M55 rockets containing GB and VX nerve agent. In June 2019, the [Static Detonation Chamber](#), an explosive destruction technology, began destroying the mustard stockpile. The mustard campaign is more than 35% complete. As of May 1, a total of more than 57 tons of chemical agent have been destroyed in Kentucky.

The [Program Executive Office, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives](#) is responsible for destroying the remaining U.S. chemical weapons stockpile in [Colorado](#) and Kentucky. The organization oversees the contract for design, construction, systemization, operation and closure of BGCAPP with BPBG and subcontractors Amentum, Battelle Memorial Institute and GP Strategies.

(more)

Blue Grass Plant Completes First Munitions Destruction Campaign (continued)

"We are one step closer to destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in Kentucky and fulfilling our pledge to the nation and an international arms control treaty," said Michael S. Abaie, program executive officer for Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives. "The performance at this facility has been incredible, and that's aside from doing this work safely during a pandemic. We are all justifiably proud of this team."

The stockpile sites in Colorado and Kentucky account for the last 10% of what was originally a national stockpile of more than 30,000 tons of chemical weapons. The [U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity](#) destroyed the initial 90%, which was stored at seven other sites across the U.S. and on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific. Chemical weapons destruction in Colorado began in 2015. Both sites will complete destruction of chemical weapons by Dec. 31, 2023.

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Photo caption: Two operators work together to place one of the last overpacked 8-inch projectiles containing nerve agent into a tray to begin the destruction process at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant May 9. The last GB 8-inch projectile was destroyed May 11, marking the complete destruction of an entire type of chemical weapon.