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Chem-Bio News

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2. WHO HEAD INDICATES FULL FLU PANDEMIC TO BE DECLARED: *"The World Health Organization is likely to raise its flu alert to the top of its six-point scale and declare a pandemic, its director-general indicated in an interview published on Monday."*

3. SAFETY WOES SEEN AT N-ARMS COMPLEX: *"Contractors at one of the nation's major nuclear weapons complexes repeatedly used substandard construction materials and components that could have caused a major radioactive spill, a recently completed internal government probe has found."*

Chem-Demil News

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2. UMATILLA CHEMICAL AGENT DISPOSAL FACILITY - DISPOSAL PLANT GM RETIRES: *"Doug Hamrick is leaving what he describes as "clearly the most challenging" but also "the most rewarding" job he's held during nearly 40 years working in chemical demilitarization and nuclear operations."*

3. PUEBLO CHEMICAL DEPOT - STATE: CHEMICAL WEAPON CHECKS ARE INSUFFICIENT: *"Colorado health officials are continuing to put pressure on the Army to improve the way it monitors the igloos housing mustard agent weapons at the Pueblo Chemical Depot."*

CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

TEXAS BIOLAB BILL WOULD KEEP TOO MANY SECRETS, OPPONENTS SAY

By Emily Ramshaw
The Dallas Morning News
April 29, 2009

"Sen. Joan Huffman's bill, which passed through a Senate committee this week with no debate, would make most information on so-called "select agents" in Texas labs confidential. Lawmakers say it's a necessary step to keep dangerous pathogens such as ebola and

anthrax out of the hands of bioterrorists – and to protect the privacy of those working with it.

But opponents say the effort has nothing to do with security and everything to do with avoiding transparency. And they say it's designed to punish biodefense watchdogs who used Texas open-records laws to uncover lab-related infections and illness at Texas A&M University in 2007.

Those accidents – and a subsequent cover-up – forced A&M to suspend its select-agent research and pay a \$1 million federal fine.

The bill awaits a vote in the full Senate.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/043009dntexbiolab.3b7674f.html>

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WHO HEAD INDICATES FULL FLU PANDEMIC TO BE DECLARED

By Ben Harding and Laura MacInnes

Reuters

May 04, 2009

“The World Health Organization is likely to raise its flu alert to the top of its six-point scale and declare a pandemic, its director-general indicated in an interview published on Monday.

In remarks setting the scene for another alert increase, but without saying when, WHO chief Margaret Chan warned against over-confidence following a stabilization in the number of new cases of the H1N1 strain that has proved deadly in Mexico.

"Level 6 does not mean, in any way, that we are facing the end of the world. It is important to make this clear because (otherwise) when we announce level 6 it will cause an unnecessary panic," she told Spanish newspaper El Pais.

"Flu viruses are very unpredictable, very deceptive ... We should not be over-confident. One must not give H1N1 the opportunity to mix with other viruses. That is why we are on alert."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE5431DI20090504>

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SAFETY WOES SEEN AT N-ARMS COMPLEX

By James Rosen

Deseret News

May 03, 2009

“Contractors at one of the nation's major nuclear weapons complexes repeatedly used substandard construction materials and components that could have caused a major radioactive spill, a recently completed internal government probe has found.

One of the materials used at the Savannah River Site on the South Carolina-Georgia border failed to meet federal safety standards and "could have resulted in a spill of up to 15,000 gallons of high-level radioactive waste," the Energy Department's inspector general found.

The inspector general's five-month investigation also found that contractors bought 9,500 tons of substandard steel reinforcing bars for the Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C.

The faulty steel was discovered after a piece of it broke during the construction of a facility to convert spent nuclear weapons-grade plutonium and uranium into mixed-oxide, or MOX, fuel for civilian reactors.

Replacing 14 tons of substandard rebar — the steel bars commonly used to reinforce concrete — that already had been installed cost \$680,000 and delayed the completion of the \$4.8 billion MOX facility, the investigation found.

Among the other questionable components the probe found were piping, steel plates, an unusable \$12 million "glovebox" used to handle radioactive materials, furnace module doors and robots that are used to avoid human exposure to radiological and chemical materials.

In an April 23 memo to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Inspector General Gregory Friedman said contractors and subcontractors that build, supply and install equipment at the Savannah River facilities ignored safety regulations developed by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/print/705301248/Safety-woes-seen-at-N-arms-complex.html>

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Chem-Demil News

ARMY DESTROYS 60 PERCENT OF U.S. CHEMICAL WEAPONS

US Chemical Materials Agency News Release

April 28, 2009

“U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) officials announced the destruction of 60 percent of the U.S. declared stockpile under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This milestone was achieved Saturday, April 25. CMA reached the 50 percent milestone in

December 2007 and is poised to destroy its two-millionth munition in the coming months. "We have increased our efficiency at destroying the nation's chemical weapons stockpile while maintaining the highest safety and environmental compliance standards," said Conrad Whyne, CMA Director. "This accomplishment is the result of a true team effort between our storage and destruction staff consisting of both government and contractor personnel, and I commend the dedication of the members of our highly skilled work force," he added.

"It took eight years to destroy the first 10 percent of agent, including agent destroyed before the CWC entered into force. Back then, the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System (JACADS) was our first operating facility, and we were still mastering operations," said Col. Robert Billington, CMA Project Manager for Chemical Stockpile Elimination. "Since then, we have systematically applied the lessons learned from JACADS and our other operating sites to continually improve our efficiency," he said.

Another big success of CMA's chemical demilitarization program is safety. "We have worked hard to instill a safety culture throughout the program," said Greg St. Pierre, CMA Director of Risk Management. "Over time, our work force has reduced our Recordable Injury Rate or RIR—the rate of injuries per 200,000 man-hours worked which we report to OSHA—from more than 4.0 at JACADS to 0.62, our March 2009 rate. By contrast, the construction industry RIR is 6.3.

Industries with a lower injury rate are finance, data processing and libraries," he added. In reaching the 60 percent destruction mark, CMA has also reduced the overall continued storage risk from the nation's stockpiled chemical weapons by 94 percent. Much of this reduction is due to CMA's complete destruction of VX and GB nerve agents at its chemical demilitarization sites, achieved in December 2008. The storage risk continues to decrease with every new destruction milestone CMA achieves.

Destruction of chemical weapons is complete at Newport, Ind.; Aberdeen, Md.; and Johnston Island. Operations continue at CMA's remaining destruction sites in Tooele, Utah; Umatilla, Ore.; Anniston, Ala.; and Pine Bluff, Ark. These sites are now destroying or preparing to destroy blister agent. CMA continues to safely store chemical agent munitions near Richmond, Ky., and at Pueblo, Colo. For more information about CMA, visit <http://www.cma.army.mil>."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cma.army.mil/include/docrendition.asp?DocID=003680515>

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UMATILLA CHEMICAL AGENT DISPOSAL FACILITY - DISPOSAL PLANT GM RETIRES
US Army Chemical Materials Agency News Release
April 30, 2009

"Doug Hamrick (left, above) is leaving what he describes as "clearly the most challenging" but also "the most rewarding" job he's held during nearly 40 years working in chemical demilitarization and nuclear operations. But the Project General Manager at the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) since late 2002 wants to make one

thing perfectly clear: "I wouldn't leave if I didn't have the ultimate confidence in this staff" to finish the project successfully. "There will be challenging times and frustrating times, but I'm very comfortable being able to watch as this project reaches a successful end."

Doug said the public is equally confident. Although it took time to foster, Doug takes great satisfaction in the support UMCDF has received from local communities and stakeholders.

"We've truly tried to keep the commitment to be open, honest and candid," he said. "Our stakeholders understand that we're not perfect. But when we make mistakes we disclose them and resolve to do better." It takes vigilance to maintain the public's confidence, he added, noting, "It took years to earn that trust and it could be shattered by one mistake."

Doug said he's been fortunate to help manage some excellent projects over his career. For instance, he was plant and startup manager at the Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ANCDF), director and operations manager for Westinghouse Hanford Company, project director for Westinghouse Government and Environmental Services Company, and project manager and deputy manager on projects at Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site. But he has no reservations declaring the team at UMCDF "the best I've ever seen. It's the whole team, my staff, the plant staff and the work force. It's been a real honor to work with this team."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cma.army.mil/include/docrendition.asp?DocID=003680559>

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PUEBLO CHEMICAL DEPOT - STATE: CHEMICAL WEAPON CHECKS ARE INSUFFICIENT

By John Norton
The Pueblo Chieftain
May 01, 2009

"Colorado health officials are continuing to put pressure on the Army to improve the way it monitors the igloos housing mustard agent weapons at the Pueblo Chemical Depot.

Doug Knappe, of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, read a statement at Wednesday night's meeting of the Colorado Chemical Demilitarization Citizens Advisory Commission charging that the way mustard agent leaks are monitored falls well below the standards that will be used by another Pentagon agency in charge of destroying the weapons and that leaks are found too late."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.chieftain.com/articles/2009/05/01/news/local/doc49fa90b471542761832666.txt>

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