

Non-Stockpile Program Needs Citizen Involvement!

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Non-Stockpile Program needs citizen involvement!

(The following is excerpted from the April 1998 issue of "Common Sense", the newsletter of the Chemical Weapons Working Group, published by the Kentucky Environmental Foundation.)

When the Army announced in the mid-1980s that chemical weapons were being stored in nine U.S. military bases, many people living in surrounding communities were surprised, shocked and angry. Over the next ten years, the debate over how to get rid of the chemical weapons became more and more

intense, as citizens fought for a chance to make decisions about disposal technologies.

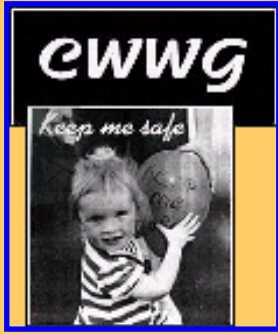
As the debate continues around disposal of the chemical weapons stockpile, another clean-up program, the Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Program (NSCMP), is getting more attention from the public. The Non-Stockpile program is significant not only for its clean-up mission, but also because it provides an opportunity for Army decision-makers to "do things differently," and involve citizens in the decision-making process from the beginning. While several decisions affecting the course of the program have already been made, the NSCMP, with an initial timeline of 40 years, is still in the "beginning" stages. Therefore, it is critical that citizens be informed and involved.

Non-stockpile materiel are miscellaneous bombs, projectiles, chemical agent identification sets (CAIS) and other warfare "products" which are not part of the chemical weapons stockpile. These non-stockpile weapons are scattered at 65 sites -- mostly military bases or former military bases -- in 31 states. In many cases, these weapons were dumped or buried in places which are now near civilian neighborhoods and public access areas.

The Kentucky Environmental Foundation has been slowly developing a network of grassroots groups and individuals affected by the non-stockpile program. This network may be to the non-stockpile issue what the Chemical Weapons Working Group is to the chemical weapons stockpile program. Aside from that, a "stakeholders' committee," is currently being formed as a cooperative effort by grassroots organizations and individuals and the Project Manager's office for NSCMP. The group has already had two meetings, in July and November of 1997, to identify and discuss programmatic issues in the NSCMP and begin developing a process for citizen involvement in the program. There is a need for more involvement from affected citizens in both the grassroots network and the stakeholders' committee.

Issues around the non-stockpile program can be divided into two main categories: public involvement and outreach; and regulatory and technology issues. Draft strategies for a national public outreach program, part of which are an environmental justice strategy and separate Native American outreach strategy, are being reviewed and altered. Technologies for disposal of CAIS sets and non-explosive weapons have been developed by the Army (see chart), and may soon be tested. Technologies to destroy explosive non-stockpile weapons have not yet been identified, although several have been developed.

If you live near a non-stockpile site and are interested in getting informed and involved in the program, please contact Elizabeth Crowe, Kentucky Environmental Foundation, (606) 986-0868.



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