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## Chemical Incident Response: Ensuring that Contaminated Victims Receive Timely Trauma Care

### SUMMARY

Emergency responders need to ensure that trauma victims are decontaminated and transported to a healthcare facility, and that definitive advanced trauma life support (ATLS) care is initiated within 60 minutes of a chemical incident.

### DESCRIPTION

On May 22, 2007, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the US Army, and several state and local agencies staged the Umatilla Community CSEPP Exercise 2007. This exercise tested the emergency response capabilities of the Umatilla, Oregon, region following an accidental release of warfare agent VX at the Umatilla Chemical Depot (UMCD). Participating agencies included the Oregon Emergency Management Agency; the Washington Emergency Management Division; Umatilla, Morrow, and Benton Counties; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservations; and several Oregon chapters of the American Red Cross.

The exercise scenario described a release of liquid VX due to the accidental detonation of several land mines containing this nerve agent at one of UMCD's storage igloos. The explosion dispersed debris and liquid contamination over a 30-foot radius of the blast site. According to this scenario, two workers died, and five additional personnel suffered trauma and VX exposure injuries.

During this exercise, decontamination operations took priority over medical treatment of some trauma victims. Medical Response Team (MRT) personnel took almost 80 minutes to decontaminate and transport 2 victims to the on-post clinic. However, MRT personnel did not provide these victims with effective ATLS care during that time. The Umatilla Community CSEPP Exercise 2007 after-action report (AAR) observed that the two victims would have died shortly after arrival at the clinic. The AAR concluded that a "delay in treatment beyond 60 minutes significantly increases mortality from trauma and agent exposure."

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The Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) is a partnership between FEMA and the US Army. This partnership was established in 1988 to help communities adjacent to the eight US Army chemical warfare agent stockpile sites enhance their ability to respond to a chemical emergency that may originate at one of these facilities. For more information on CSEPP, please refer to the [LLIS.gov CSEPP Resource Center](http://www.LLIS.gov/CSEPPResourceCenter).

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VX is a human-made chemical warfare agent classified as a nerve agent. For additional information on VX, please refer to the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Facts About VX](#).

Emergency responders need to ensure that trauma victims are decontaminated and transported to a healthcare facility, and that definitive ATLS care is initiated within 60 minutes of a chemical incident.

#### CSEPP Igloo



**Source:** Kentucky Division of Emergency Management Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program. [What is CSEPP? Types of Weapons and Storage.](#)

#### **CITATION**

Federal Emergency Management Agency, US Army. *Umatilla Community CSEPP Exercise 2007*. 16 Jul 2007.

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