Recovery of Chemical Weapons
An Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) oversees the U.S. chemical weapons elimination program, protecting public health and safety, by:

- Monitoring the Department of Defense (DoD) process for safely destroying chemical weapons
- Reviewing and providing recommendations on procedures for personnel to safely handle, transport, and destroy recovered chemical weapons materials

Before the chemical weapons elimination program began, the U.S. disposed of chemical weapons and materials in a number of ways:

- **Including burial and dumping at sea.**
  - Post disposal of sulfur mustard in military embankments

Discarded chemical weapons materials have been found and disposed in more than 200 U.S. locations, including 2 territories. When these materials are found, CDC is notified and:

- Evaluates the plans for transportation and disposal
- Makes recommendations on the plans for safe disposal and transportation of the recovered weapons and materials

DoD teams are often able to use mobile equipment to dispose of materials near the discovery locations to minimize the risk to public health.

Discarded Chemical Weapons in Unlikely Places

- **Delaware:** Artillery shell found in a driveway paved with crushed clamshells. DoD personnel recovered the artillery shell and destroyed it.
- **New York:** Commercial fishermen found chemical munitions while dredging for clams off the coast of Long Island. Two fishermen were treated at a local hospital, where a nurse trained in chemical agent injuries recognized their symptoms were related to a chemical exposure.

If you see something suspicious, call your local police department.

Additional Information

- **Environmental Public Health Readiness Branch**
  - [http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil/](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil/)
- **The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):** Emergency Response Safety and Health Database
  - [http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ershdb/agentlistcategory.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ershdb/agentlistcategory.html)

Get more emergency preparedness resources from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).