

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



▲ Buried munitions

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.

◀ Past disposal of sulfur mustard containers at sea.

Discarded chemical weapons materials have been found and destroyed in **more than 100 U.S. locations, including 2 territories.** An estimated 200 additional disposal locations have not been



■ Chemical materials not found

■ Chemical materials found

Hawaii

Alaska

U.S. Virgin Islands

Guam

DoD teams respond to discoveries of chemical weapons materials or related contaminated equipment.

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.

- ▶ A DoD team uses mobile equipment for disposal of recovered chemical materials.

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. These discarded chemical weapons can be found in unlikely places. If you see something suspicious, don't touch it. Call your local police department.

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▲ Chemical munitions recovered from the ocean.



▲ Munitions shell recovered off NY coast.

New York: Commercial fishermen found chemical munitions while dredging for clams off the coast of Long Island. Two fisherman were treated at a local hospital, where a nurse trained in chemical agent injuries recognized their symptoms were related to a chemical exposure. This incident underscores the importance of training first responders and medical personnel on procedures for chemical agent exposure.

Training first responders saves lives.

District of Columbia: Chemical warfare research was conducted at labs in Spring Valley during World War I, and chemical agents were buried near the labs. Many chemical items have been found and recovered. The U.S. Army developed plans for recovery and destruction and CDC reviewed the plans and approaches. Recovered items are destroyed or disposed of as they are found.

CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People



▲ Buried chemical warfare materials found in Spring Valley.

Additional Information



- ▶ **Environmental Public Health Readiness Branch**
<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>