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Anniston Chemical Weapons Destruction Complete

Dangerous chemical weapons destruction in Anniston is now complete. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has announced the end of chemical munitions incineration at the Anniston Chemical Demilitarization Facility.

This completion marks one of the largest and most successful chemical weapons destruction operations in U.S. history. Shortly after 3 p.m. on Thursday, September 22, the last of more than 660,000 nerve agent and mustard agent-filled munitions stored at the site were destroyed in the state-of-the-art facility at the Anniston Army Depot. Chemical weapons destruction began there in 2003 after more than 10 years of painstaking review of permit applications by ADEM and thorough assessment of environmental safeguards in the storage, operation, and incineration procedures at such a facility.

The overall project included more than 25 public hearings, and was among the most controversial operations ever undertaken. ADEM's work on the project included scientific and engineering analysis and culminated in the Department issuing a permit in July of 1997 under the Alabama Hazardous Waste Management Act allowing construction and operation of the facility. After that time, ADEM issued subsequent permit renewals as necessary and 45 modifications.

Through ADEM, inspectors have maintained a presence at the site 24-hours a day, seven days a week to monitor destruction activities totaling more than 70,000 work hours in the last eight years. During this near-decade of operations not a single release of any chemical agent escaped outside the reactor chamber.

"Mere words can not express my gratitude to the ADEM staff who, over the past eight years, has spent time away from their families to monitor this facility and ensure the safe, efficient destruction of these weapons of mass destruction," said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. "The citizens in Anniston and across Alabama are safer today than they were when this process began and I am proud this agency could play such a major role in ensuring that safety."

Even though the destruction of chemical agent-filled munitions is complete and a noteworthy milestone, closure activities will continue at the site. During this process, all residual chemicals and equipment will be decontaminated or destroyed. ADEM will continue to maintain an on-site presence throughout the process.

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