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Newport Depot on schedule disposing of VX nerve agent

The Newport, (Ind.) Chemical Agent Disposal Facility has begun the task of destroying VX, a chemical nerve agent developed in the 1960s.

Susan Gilman, outreach office manager at the Newport Chemical Depot, was the featured speaker at Monday's Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting.

VX is erroneously called a nerve gas. Instead, it is a liquid substance with the consistency of motor oil or Karo syrup, Gilman said.

The chemical was originally created to be infused into

land mines or sprayed in areas in times of war. However, Gilman said, "from what we've been told, the U.S. never used VX in combat."

The International Chemical Weapons Convention banned the use of nerve agents and requires stockpiles to be destroyed by 2007. The only facility that manufactured the nerve agent is now in charge of destroying it.

Gilman said an estimated 1,000 tons of the chemical is to be destroyed as part of the multi-national chemical weapons ban. To date, 55,356 pounds have been destroyed. "We've got a ways to go," she said.

Thus far, only small batches of VX have been destroyed as the process is fine-tuned.

Approximately 1,000 employees at the depot are involved in neutralizing the chemical.

The first step is to add hot sodium hydroxide and water to VX. The process created a byproduct, caustic wastewater, which also must be disposed of carefully. Currently, the Army is working with a DuPont wastewater treatment plant in New Jersey to treat the caustic wastewater. An agreement has not been reached pending outcome of Centers for Disease Control studies, Gilman said.

See VX on other side



Susan Gilman, outreach office manager for Newport (Ind.) Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, collects surveys from people at Monday's Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting.

Heater suspected in Tuesday fire

A kerosene heater is suspected of causing a fire that resulted in a Hoopeston man being treated at Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital.

Hoopeston firefighters, police and ambulance personnel were called at 2:09 a.m. Tuesday to the 500 block of East Seminary for a structure fire officials believe was caused by a heater in the living room.

Information on the unidentified man was unavailable at press time.

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Letters to the Editor



Alderman seeks public input

On Nov. 15, the Hoopeston City Council will be voting on amending the Municipal Code Section 9.12.110 which reads, "It is unlawful for any person, adult or minor, to transport, carry, possess or have alcoholic liquor in or upon any city property which has been designated or dedicated as public park within the city (Ord. 81-76)"

The proposed amended ordinance will read the

VX continued from other side

Last weekend, the Newport plant shut down after wastewater leaked when a gasket failed to seal properly. The problem was fixed and the plant is once again neutralizing VX, Gilman said.

The second step is cleansing the storage tanks. Each is rinsed three times, then circulated with hot air. A borescope is used to check for residue. Electric coils are then inserted into each container and heated to 1000 degrees for 15 minutes. When cleaned, the containers may be recycled, she said.

VX is a particularly deadly nerve agent and is odorless and tasteless. "I've talked to people who have actually smelled it and they said it is odorless," Gilman said. "I've never talked to anyone who's actually tasted it."

It has been reported that the plant contains enough VX to kill everyone in Indiana which, Gilman said, is true but unlikely. "You'd have to line everybody up and give them a drop of VX," she said.

Employees who work around the chemical carry antidote kits. Atropine, injected intramuscularly, is

same with the added phrase "except when a special event liquor license has been issued pursuant to Section 6.20.070, specifying premises in or upon City property."

This is an exception I have been told by Hoopeston citizens that should not be made. I agree with you but two or three votes against this will not sop this exception from passing. So if you really do not want beer tents and alcoholic drinks in the parks, how

an antidote, as is bleach.

The Newport Chemical Depot was built in the 1940s as the Wabash River Ordnance Works. Along with VX, the plant has also produced TNT.

The 7,000 acre complex includes about 3,000 acres of farm ground and 2,000 acres of standing timber. The depot tries to be a good steward of the land and has introduced some native grasses to part of the complex, replacing those destroyed when the depot was built.

Gilman said work at the depot is also affected by the Indiana brown bat, which is on the endangered species list and likes to make its home in trees near the site.

Briefly

Correction

A list of prize winners at the Fiesta Open House did not include Olivia Odle who won a DVD.

Just the Facts regrets the error.

Coats needed

Hoopeston Multi Agency is holding its annual coat drive. Coats are needed for children ages 0-18 and may be dropped off at 206 S. First Ave., Hoopeston. For more information, call (217) 283-5544.

Weather



Chance of thunderstorms today and tonight. High 63, low 35. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 55, low 33.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

about getting gout of your reclining chairs and your couches and your pews and come to the town meeting and voice your thoughts on this matter at the meeting. I personally do not think we need to turn your parks into a saloon for a few special groups for city revenue. Mr. McFerren did not give this beautiful park to special event grups, he gave it to you, the citizens of Hoopeston.

Thank you. I hope to hear from you at the meeting.

Jerry Yonkers

Hoopeston

Just the Facts welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must be signed and must include the author's daytime telephone number. Letters may be mailed to Just the Facts, P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL 60942; faxed to (217) 283-9348 or emailed to publish@justthefacts.net.

Classifieds

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