

Military bases in Maryland are looking for toxic waste

By Tom Horton

Most federal military bases in Maryland say they are beginning to identify whether they have potentially dangerous toxic waste stored, according to a survey by *The Sun*.

There are 26 possible sites on a dozen federal installations in the state, according to a Department of Defense list; however, it appears that for some sites the list is outdated, whereas other sites may not be listed.

In at least two instances, the sites listed are military firing ranges, where the hazardous waste is unexploded ammunition.

These are Bloodworth Island, a marsh island in the bay that is currently bombed by planes from Patuxent River Air-Naval Station, and Blossom Point, on the Potomac River, a firing range not used in years.

At Fort Meade, a spokesman said the Army had completed a check of the five sites there on the Defense Department list and found there had been no hazardous waste stored at any of them for several years.

At least one site about which Maryland's toxic waste officials would like to know more, "if they would tell us," is not on the list, according to Ron Nelson, chief of the state health department's Waste Management Administration.

It is an old ordnance storage facility owned by the General Services Administration in northern Anne Arundel county.

Mr. Nelson said the state has "fairly good cooperation" with its federal installations on active toxic waste sites, which require a state permit to operate.

But "it has been a struggle up to now," he said, to determine what is stored in abandoned or inactive sites. All the sites on the Defense list presumably are such abandoned ones.

Mr. Nelson and other waste officials said they knew of two or three problems from old toxic waste storage sites on military bases. These included two separate instances of well contamination from chemicals at abandoned Nike bases in Baltimore county; and a sanitary landfill at Fort Detrick in Frederick county, where monitoring is going on to determine if there is any contamination.

"But our knowledge is extremely limited," Mr. Nelson said.

A further problem, he said, is that federal agencies tend not to list hazardous materials as waste until they have tried — sometimes for years — to recycle or reuse it, or sell it to someone who can.

"So it might be stored for some time before it entered the stream of what is tracked as hazardous waste," Mr. Nelson said.

He said Maryland and other states have a running dispute with the federal government over the fact that its Superfund cleanup money for abandoned toxic waste sites does not extend to those on military installations.

He said federal facilities "have maintained that if their wastes migrated off-site, the state would be responsible for cleanup. . . . that would be untenable."

A spokesman at Patuxent River said the air-naval station has "at least six sites" where wastes were once buried or stored, "and the Navy is now doing an assessment of them to see if they need to be controlled."

He said at least a couple of the sites were thought to have been used to bury old aircraft parts and construction materials. The pollution from one abandoned landfill is being collected by a modern, active landfill, he said.

At Indian Head Naval Ordnance Station in Southern Maryland, a spokesman said, "There are five abandoned waste sites suspected of having harmful chemicals. . . . There are no known leakages or health problems."

He said the Navy had contracted to have the materials there analyzed and "if there is a problem, to clean them up."

In the Aberdeen Proving Ground-Edgewood Arsenal complex in Harford county, the Army said there was only one abandoned landfill they were aware of, at a site known as O Field. However a spokesman was not able to tell *The Sun* as of last week what was in the fenced-off landfill, or what were the Army's cleanup plans.

"Generally, I think the federal facilities are beginning to do the kinds of investigations needed now," said John Koontz, Mr. Nelson's chief of enforcement at the Waste Management Administration.

Dumps abandoned by military may contain highly toxic waste

TOXIC, from A1

At hearings yesterday before a House subcommittee he chairs, Mr. Synar pointed out that two such companies are under federal indictment for improper dumping and two others are under investigation. The committee identified the companies under indictment as Holley Electric Company, and Nuclear Engineering

"We have no sites that we know of where the public is at immediate risk as a result of [Defense] activities."

— Peter Daley



Associated Press

[all

Mayor Dennis J. Kuciterday made his first trip to Cleveland's City Hall was defeated for a second term as mayor in 1979. He is expected to serve the remainder of a deceased councilman's