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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "DIOXIN SOIL TO BE TREATED" NCBC GULFPORT MS  
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# Dioxin soil to be treated

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Technicians on Wednesday began processing dioxin-contaminated soil at the Seabee Center in Gulfport in work that could lead to an eventual cleanup of a site where the herbicide Agent Orange was stored.

Specially-suited workers from IT Corp. of Knoxville, Tenn., were scheduled late Wednesday night to begin treating soil in an untested device designed to separate and destroy dioxin through the use of heat, solvents and ultraviolet light. The work had been rescheduled from afternoon to nighttime because of the heat.

Later this month, crews from another firm, J.M. Huber Co. of Borger, Texas, are slated to demonstrate an experimental process using a device known as an advanced electrical reactor. That process destroys dioxin with extremely high temperatures.

Both firms are under contract with the U.S. Air Force to process a total of 3,500 pounds of contaminated soil at the base. The work is part of a research effort directed by the Air Force, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy to identify a "useful technology" to treat contaminated soil at three military installations — the Gulfport base, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., and Johnston Island, in the Western Pacific Ocean.

With the tests, "we'll be able to determine whether or not it will be economically feasible to clean up the site," Air Force Maj. Jim Heaberg said.

It now costs between \$500 and \$1,000 a cubic yard to dispose of contaminated soil at high-tech incinerators throughout the country. Decontaminating the soil may offer a less-expensive alternative, the Air Force officials said.

IT Corp., which also will conduct work at Johnston Island, will receive about \$573,000 from the Air Force, while Huber will be paid \$300,000 for the testing.

About 60 percent of the \$3.7 million earmarked for the research effort — which includes soil sampling and other monitoring already done at the three bases — will be spent in Gulfport. The higher costs are attributed to the problems posed by the unique soil conditions there, officials said. "We're putting our money against the most difficult problem," said Wayne R. Mathis, an EPA engineer.

Heaberg said the surface of the storage site is composed of a mixture of asphalt, pea gravel and crushed shell.

Agent Orange, used to defoliate jungles during the Vietnam War, was stored at a 12-acre site on the Seabee Center between 1968 and 1977. The

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more than 840,000 gallons kept at the base in later years were among the 2.4 million gallons of the herbicide destroyed on a waste-burning ship in the Pacific.

Dioxin, a byproduct of the manufacture of Agent Orange, has been shown to be extremely toxic in tests on laboratory animals. Soil samples at the former storage area have revealed dioxin concentrations of as high as 200 parts per billion — well above widely established safe levels.

The storage area is sealed off, and state and federal officials contend no significant contamination has been found off the site.

The testing at the Seabee Center must be completed by July 15. EPA and the Mississippi Bureau of Pollution Control have waived the usual hazardous-waste permit requirements for the testing until that date.