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Dioxin incinerator starts its work

Testing of a portable dioxin incinerator began Monday in Gulfport. If tests are successful, the

machine will be used to purge 9,000 tons of soil the deadly chemical. Details, C-1.

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Dioxin burning to start

By **GEORGE LAMMONS**
STAFF WRITER

■ The incinerator that will purge dioxin contamination from 9,000 tons of soil at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport is in place and initial testing has started.

In about two weeks it will cook its first batches of dirt to make sure the process actually gets rid of the dioxin. And after laboratories have analyzed that soil — a six-week process — the incinerator will work 24 hours a day for 90 days to cleanse the rest of the soil at the 12-acre site.

The process should be complete and the incinerator removed by the end of June.

Air Force Maj. Jim Heaberg, project spokesman, said soil will be removed from the contaminated 12-acre site to depths varying from 6 inches to about 18 inches. The Air Force Engineering and Services Center Laboratory at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. is responsible for the \$5.4 million project.

The soil was contaminated by leaks of Agent Orange during and after the Vietnam War, when 17,000 barrels of the defoliant were stored at the base. Dioxin is a by-product of Agent Orange.

The incinerator, part of a new hazardous waste removal process, arrived unassembled at the Seabee Base in September on 13 tractor-trailers.

Heaberg said the portable incinerator is still experimental because it has never been run round-the-clock for 90 days.

However, he also said the system is expected to be effective, based on similar technology that worked in an Arkansas experiment. Another similar system, tested at Times Beach, Mo., has the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Sierra Club stamps of approval.

And, if it works, the portable system will also be more economical than conventional methods. Without the portable incinerator, the contaminated dirt has to be sent to an approved landfill or baked in a stationary incinerator.

Heaberg said the project would cost about \$6,000 a ton to send the contaminated soil to a stationary incinerator in Texas. The cost for the portable incinerator will be \$400 to \$700 per ton.



A workman checks out the incinerator which will be used to burn 9,000 tons of dioxin

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