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LETTER FROM U S ARMY REGARDING PROCESSING AND HOUSING SAFETY  
PRECAUTIONS FOR ORANGE HERBICIDE NCBC GULFPORT MS  
7/1/1972  
U S ARMY



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH UNITED STATES ARMY  
FORT SAM HOUSTON, TEXAS 78234

JUL 1 1972

Honorable Patrick T. Caffery  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Caffery:

This is in reply to your letter of 21 June 1972 concerning the rewarehousing of defoliant material by members of the 355th General Supply Company at Gulfport, Mississippi.

As stated in my 11 July 1972 message, the material in question has been handled by personnel for several years without ill effects. At Gulfport alone, 70,000 drums have been processed during the last two years by the regular work force with only the normal safety precautions being followed and no special protective clothing except hard hats and steel-toed shoes which are normal during crane operations.

Occasionally, dioxin forms in a few of the drums. This contaminant has caused concern among people unfamiliar with the herbicide Orange material. Sensationalized stories, developed from tests on mice where the chemical was ingested orally and side effects did occur, have also caused alarm. Any dioxin content in herbicide Orange, however, is only one-tenth of one part per million units, and since skin absorption of the Orange material is negligible, it is relatively harmless unless ingested in quantity.

Nevertheless, since even a generally non-toxic material may adversely affect a few individuals, stringent precautionary measures have been prescribed. Prior to the start of the project, the commanding officer issued detailed instructions to all personnel covering the type of material to be handled, the care to be exercised because of possible leakage, and the action to be taken if any of the liquid herbicide came in contact with the skin. Two 400-gallon water trailers were positioned near the work site and several small water containers were distributed throughout the work site to insure an available supply of water should an individual come in contact with the material. Further, a fire station is located only 400 yards away and a dispensary is available nearby.

The allegation concerning use of an inexperienced crane operator and the absence of other physical safety measures cannot be established as factual and are believed to be without foundation. Emphasis will continue to be given to precautionary measures such as hard hats, safety shoes, and the use of licensed equipment operators.

The condition of some of the drums, bung seals, and dunnage, as indicated in the attached photographs, prompted the rewarehousing of the herbicide drums pending receipt of disposition instructions. Since the work project began approximately 1600 drums have been processed with only three drums requiring replacement. This was accomplished without any spillage and none of the personnel came in contact with the liquid.

Since receipt of your letter, we have also received a similar inquiry from Senator Long on behalf of his constituent, Mrs. Edward D. Fischer, Jr. This correspondence indicates she has provided copies of her letter on this same subject to President Nixon, Senator Ellender, Congressman Hebert, Senator Hart and Congressman Boggs. We are furnishing Senator Long with the information contained in this reply.

Sincerely,

WESLEY C. FRANKLIN  
Major General, USA  
Deputy Commanding General  
Reserve Forces, Southern Area

1 Incl  
Photographs

CF: (less incl)  
HQDA (DAAR-LOI)

Commanding General, US Continental Army Command

Commanding General, 377th Support Brigade

Commanding General, San Antonio Air Materiel Area, Kelly AFB, TX 78241

Commanding General, 355th General Supply Company, New Orleans, LA

✓ Commanding Officer, Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, MS 39501