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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "TOXIC DIOXIN CARTRIDGES FROM REPROCESSING OF  
HERBICIDE BURIED AT OREGON SITE OFFICIALS SAY" NCBC GULFPORT MS  
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## Toxic dioxin cartridges from reprocessing of herbicide buried at Oregon site, officials say

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ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR

Twelve cartridges containing a toxic chemical filtered from the Herbicide Orange stored at the Seabee Center in Gulfport have been buried at a hazardous waste disposal site in eastern Oregon, it was learned Monday.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality official Fred Bromfeld said an ounce-and-a-half of dioxin — a contaminant produced during the manufacture of Herbicide Orange — was buried by Chem-Nuclear Systems Inc. in late September at a privately owned, state-monitored disposal site near Arlington, Ore. Bromfeld is supervisor of the department's hazardous waste division.

The cartridges con-

tained activated charcoal which had absorbed the dioxin during a pilot reprocessing project conducted in Gulfport. The containers were sealed in metal casing prior to being placed 32 feet underground.

Chem-Nuclear Systems, headquartered in Bellevue, Wash., with offices in Oregon, applied for a permit to bury the cartridges on Sept. 15 and was granted approval a week later, according to Oregon environmental authorities. No public hearings were held to consider the application.

The disposal in Oregon came less than four weeks after health officials in California refused to let the cartridges be placed in a landfill near West Covina, Calif.

The California Health Department turned down an application by the Ben K. Kazarian Co. (BKK) to bury the containers. BKK was under contract with Agent Chemical Inc. of Houston, Tex. — the firm which had reprocessed Herbicide Orange in the pilot project — to dispose of the cartridges.

After being turned down in California, BKK paid about \$60 to Chem-Nuclear Systems to bury the dioxin at the hazardous waste disposal site in Oregon, according to Oregon authorities.

Last week, when the Air Force announced it was officially proposing that the herbicide be reprocessed, a spokesman for BKK refused to say where the cartridges had been buried

When asked specifically where the chemical was, the spokesman said, "We don't wish to say."

Nine of the 12 cartridges were produced during a series of tests conducted by Agent Chemical in June. The firm reported in July that it had successfully lowered the dioxin level in the resulting herbicide to an environmentally acceptable limit.

If the Air Force meets no opposition to reprocessing the defoliant, Agent Chemical and the federal government will negotiate a sale to the private firm so it may purify the chemical and then market it.

The other three cartridges were produced in an earlier test which resulted in conflicting but generally unsatisfactory results. The cartridges were stored at Kelley Air Force Base in Texas until they were transported to California and, ultimately, Oregon.

The proposal by the Air Force stops short of a solution to the ultimate disposition of the toxic dioxin. The amended version of a final Air Force environmental impact statement calls for the cartridges to be stored at a federal site until an acceptable disposal method is found.

Bromfeld indicated that cartridges produced

in full-scale reprocessing would not be buried in Oregon.

Saying the burial of the 12 cartridges was a "one-shot" proposition, Bromfeld said it would be "very difficult, if at all possible" for Chem-Nuclear to obtain a permit for further burial of dioxin-contaminated containers, which would come from outside Oregon.

Bromfeld said the disposal site in east Oregon is in the desert where there is little rainfall, and has a low water table with a layer of rock between the water table and the level where the dioxin is stored. He added that he thinks the dioxin buried in east Oregon is safer to the environment than the herbicide stored in 55-gallon drums which occasionally leak at the Seabee Center.

The 800,000 gallons at the Seabee Center and 1.5 million gallons on Johnson Island in the Pacific have been in storage since 1970 when the Department of Agriculture banned use of Herbicide Orange amid reports dioxin was linked to birth defects.

The Air Force had used the chemical to defoliate jungles in the Vietnam war. During its controversial use in the war, the chemical was known as Agent Orange.