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Air Force behind schedule on dioxin soil cleanup

The U.S. Air Force operation to remove dioxin from contaminated soil at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport has been delayed again.

The project, originally expected to start sometime this month, is running about 45 days behind schedule, Maj. Jim Heaberg said Thursday.

Dioxin is a contaminant found in the herbicide Agent Orange, some 840,000 gallons

of which were stored at the Seabee Center from 1968 to 1977. Soil at the base became contaminated because of leaks in the drums containing the herbicide, according to officials.

The Air Force is coordinating the project, which involves removing the toxic chemical with a portable incinerator.

Heaberg said he now expects the dioxin-removal equipment to arrive next week or

the week after.

It previously had been expected to arrive this week.

Assembly will take another two or three weeks.

Because the process is experimental, two test burnings will be made before wholesale incineration can start. Heaberg said he expects the testing will start by Nov. 1.

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