

NAS Jacksonville proposed for EPA's National Priorities List

The Navy announced July 14 that NAS Jacksonville has been proposed for placement on the National Priorities List (NPL) as a federal site that requires investigation and possible clean-up action due to past hazardous waste disposal.

The NPL is a vehicle used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prioritize those sites requiring further action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), also referred to as the "Superfund." The list serves both as an information and management tool which allows EPA to decide which sites need further investigation and clean-up.

As part of the Navy's Installation Restoration Program for clean-up of past hazardous waste sites, NAS Jacksonville conducted an Initial Assessment Survey in 1983. This study identified possible locations on the base where hazardous waste and refuse may have been disposed of in the past. The assessment included all known disposal sites as well as suspected sites named by long term or retired base employees. Forty sites were identified at that time and the number was later changed to 41.

The Initial Assessment Study was followed by a Confirmation Study. The Navy hired a private contractor to investigate the 41 sites and confirm their existence, report their potential for harm to human health or environment, and provide recommendations on whether further action or study is necessary. The Confirmation Study determined that none of the sites posed an immediate threat to human health or the environment, but that several required clean-up because they pose long term threats. As part of the NPL process, all 41 sites will be reviewed again. However, NAS officials believe that only about 11 will require clean-up.

The Confirmation Study also documented the presence of groundwater contamination in the vicinity of several sites. This contamination does not pose a threat to base personnel since all base drinking water is drawn from the deep Floridian Aquifer and not from the shallow aquifer or groundwater. Based on the location of the contaminated areas and studies which calculate the groundwater flow rate at approxi-

mately five feet per year, base environmental officials say it is improbable that contamination could have spread to private property adjacent to NAS

The CERCLA legislation provides funding and a strict methodology for investigating and cleaning up past disposal sites that potentially threaten human health and the environment. In the past, federally owned sites were not included on the list because they were not eligible for Superfund money. However, congressional interest in seeing how federal facilities compared with those in the private sector led the EPA in 1984 to include them in their proposals. Since federal facilities are not entitled to funding from the Superfund, Congress established the Defense Environmental Restoration Account for Department of Defense activities.

The proposal of new sites to the NPL is the first

step in a formal review process. Each site will be subjected to formal public review and comment before a final decision is made whether to place it on the list.

NAS Jacksonville has established a Technical Review Committee (TRC) composed of representatives from federal, state and local environmental agencies and a local citizen to help determine the most appropriate methodology for investigating and cleaning up the sites. The TRC meets on a regular basis to review the progress and comment on proposed actions.

A public information repository has been established at the Wesconnet Branch of the Jacksonville Public Library. All information and studies relative to base hazardous waste sites will be maintained there for review by interested citizens.

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