

Open Burning Operations at Radford Army Ammunition Plant

Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RFAAP) uses a permitted Open Burning Ground (OBG) to treat explosive waste materials that cannot be safely treated in the Explosive Waste Incinerators (EWI). This facility is currently permitted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ). The application to renew the permit is due in 2015. OBG operations are a concern for a group of local citizens.

The OBG is a designated and permitted area on the facility that treats explosive waste material. The OBG at Radford Army Ammunition Plant has been in use since it opened in 1941. Many waste propellants, explosives and pyrotechnics (PEP) and waste munition items are unsafe to treat by conventional methods of hazardous waste management. Typical energetic wastes treated by OB include bulk propellants and energetic material items which are not reliably detonable and/or can be burned without causing an explosion. This material is waste that has been swept from the floor of RFAAP manufacturing areas and cannot be put through the incinerator because it may contain objects that could create a spark in the grinder and cause an explosion. Typically, propellant burns last only seconds (i.e., less than one minute). Army tests also indicate that burns of dunnage plus energetics may have durations for several hours (attributed solely to the burning/smoldering of the dunnage which is added to ensure ignition and burning of the energetic material). The OBG is located along the banks of the New River in the southeastern portion of the horseshoe area bounded by the river. Operations are conducted in an area approximately 100 feet by 1,500 feet. The actual burning of explosive waste is performed in six foot by 18 foot burning pans on raised pads about 250 feet square. There are eight pads in the area, each consisting of two raised pans for a total of 16 pans.

The environmental impact of OBG operations is regulated by the VADEQ under the existing permit. OBG waste types and loading volumes are calculated in accordance with emission limits set by the VADEQ. The VADEQ designs those limits using the National Ambient Air Quality Standards to be protective of human health. RFAAP is, and will continue to be, in full compliance with these standards. Groundwater and soil samples are monitored regularly to ensure that contamination has not occurred.

RFAAP officials routinely respond to public concerns and hold voluntary public meetings twice per year to help communicate accurate facts and to answer community questions about the environmental impact of the OBG and other RFAAP operations. The last public meeting occurred on May 28, 2015.

CURRENT STATUS:

- RFAAP is working with the VADEQ on the submission of the permit renewal application.

- BAE Systems (the Operating Contractor for Radford Army Ammunition Plant) and the Army are striving to be proactive in efforts to reduce waste and the amount of content that must be processed through the OBG. Over the last five years, RFAAP OBG operations have decreased significantly; that trend should continue.
- BAE and the Army are actively working to design a new treatment facility that replaces the aged EWI facility with a unit able to handle more OBG waste. The ultimate goal is reducing OBG operations to a minimum
- RFAAP is pursuing an innovative air testing method developed by EPA in conjunction with industry and academic partners. This method provides a direct measurement of emissions from OBG operations. RFAAP is fully coordinating these efforts with VADEQ.

Please click on this link for frequently asked questions and answers:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/ConnectWithDEQ/Environmentalinformation/RadfordArmyAmmunitionPlant/RAAPFrequentlyAskedQuestions.aspx>