

NEWS RELEASE

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Defense National Stockpile Center Announces Completion of Hillsborough Mercury Over-Packing Project

Mr. Kevin Reilly, Director of the Defense National Stockpile Center's Environmental and Quality Assurance Program, announced the completion of a mercury over-packing project at the Somerville Depot in Hillsborough, N.J. A total of 75,877 flasks containing mercury were over-packed.

"I am extremely pleased and satisfied that the project is complete and that several levels of additional safety and security have been put in place," said Reilly. "I am also extremely happy to report that each individual flask was inspected and that there were no leaking flasks found in the entire inventory. Additionally, composite core samples taken from each old wooden box pallet were tested by a local laboratory and found to be free of mercury, resulting in the pallets being disposed of as normal industrial waste per Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulations."

The over-packing project consisted of visual inspections, vacuuming, and wiping the exterior of each 76-pound flask with a towelette to clean the flask surfaces. Once this was done, six flasks were placed in a thirty-gallon drum constructed of sixteen-gauge carbon steel.

Several additional layers of protection have been added inside the drums. The drums are lined with an epoxy-phenolic coating. A cushioning material that doubles as an absorbent mat was placed in the bottom of each drum. The flasks are separated by a cardboard divider for additional cushioning and are sealed in a thick plastic bag. Finally, each drum lid is equipped with a half-inch rubber gasket and a steel-locking ring that is bolted to seal the drum. The drums are now very secure and both airtight and liquid-tight.

The over-packed drums were placed on drip pans positioned on wooden pallets, and the entire over-packed inventory has been relocated to the depot's upgraded warehouse facilities. The mercury storage warehouses have new security features, newly sealed floors, new lighting, and an upgraded fire suppression system.

"Quality assurance inspections will continue to play a major role in our safety and security of the mercury stockpile," said Reilly. "To aid our quality assurance inspection process, and to insure our

continued safe storage, each pallet will be stored one-high with adequate aisle space for clear vision of each drum and pallet.”

Mercury vapor testing by New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) confirms that there was no significant contribution of mercury vapor to the ambient air from mercury storage at the DNSC Depot. Readings were taken before and during the over-packaging operation. NJIT is using state of the art mercury vapor analyzers – the Ohio LUMEX™ and Tekran™ – and will continue sampling until sometime late summer 2002.

Responding to community concerns, DNSC has made the mercury over-packing project and other safety and security enhancements high priorities at the Somerville Depot. Said Reilly, “In reaching our final decisions, we used recommendations and other input from the NJDEP, NJIT, Hillsborough Township Committee, Congressman Michael Ferguson, and the DNSC Somerville Depot Community Advisory Group.”

“The levels recorded in the depot’s new mercury storage facility are well below safe limits and are basically comparable to levels found in typical offices and municipal buildings using fluorescent lights,” says Reilly. “I find it hard to believe that anyone else in the world has adopted the kind of mercury storage protection that we have introduced in Hillsborough.”

[Click here](#) to see photographs showing the current over-packing storage method at the depot and how flasks containing mercury were previously stored at the Somerville Depot.

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The Defense National Stockpile Center is a primary level field activity for the Defense Logistics Agency. The Defense Logistics Agency provides supply support, and technical and logistics services to the military services and to several civilian agencies. Headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va., DLA is the one source for nearly every consumable item, whether for combat readiness, emergency preparedness or day-to-day operations. The DNSC is responsible for all activities necessary to provide safe, secure, and environmentally sound stewardship for all 68 commodities in the Defense National Stockpile.