

ANCHOR: IT'S NO SECRET THAT INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES RELEASE CHEMICALS INTO OUR ENVIRONMENT. BUT WITH THE EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMUNITY RIGHT TO KNOW ACT EVERYONE CAN KEEP AN EYE ON JUST HOW MUCH OF THOSE CHEMICALS ARE RELEASED. LAST YEARS REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SPARKED A LITTLE DEBATE, ENVIRONMENTAL CORRESPONDENT JAVIER HERNANDEZ JOINS US TO EXPLAIN. JAVIER?

JAVIER: LAST YEAR THERE WAS A LARGE INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF CHEMICALS REPORTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. THE INCREASE IS IN FACT DUE TO A PRO-ACTIVE MOVE BY THE D-O-D.

THE 2002 TOXIC RELEASE INVENTORY SHOWED SIGNIFICANT INCREASES OF CHEMICALS RELEASED INTO THE ENVIRONMENT AT SOME ARMY INSTALLATIONS. SOME ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SAY THE REPORT SHOWS THAT THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT IS ONE OF THE GREATEST POLLUTERS IN THE COUNTRY. BUT ARMY OFFICIALS SAY THE ACCUSATIONS ARE UNTRUE.

“THE ARMY LEVEL OF TRI REPORTING WENT UP SIGNIFICANTLY BUT IT WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT WE STARTED REPORTING RANGE OPERATIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME.” – CRAIG PETERS – USAEC POLLUTION PREVENTION TEAM, BATTELLE

AND LAST YEAR THE E-P-A INCREASED ITS LIST OF CHEMICALS THAT NEED TO BE REPORTED BY 15. THEY ALSO LOWERED THE THRESHOLD FOR THOSE CHEMICALS, INCLUDING LEAD.

“THEY ONLY HAVE TO REPORT IF THEY MEET THE THRESHOLD VALUE OF A CHEMICAL. FOR LEAD IT’S 100 POUNDS AND IT’S VERY EASY TO FIRE 100 POUNDS OF LEAD IN A YEARS TIME.” – CRAIG PETERS – USAEC POLLUTION PREVENTION TEAM, BATTELLE

THE ARMY IS INCLUDING RANGE OPERATIONS RELEASES VOLUNTARILY. IN FACT THEY LAUNCHED A STUDY TO LOOK AT THE AMOUNT OF AIR EMISSIONS FROM RANGE OPS.

“WE EXPECTED TO SEE A FEW MORE CHEMICALS THAT WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY SEEING. THE LEVELS ARE BASICALLY BELOW OUR DETECTION LIMIT, AND WE’RE USING VERY SENSITIVE INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN DETECT PARTS PER TRILLION LEVELS OF SOME OF THESE TRACE CHEMICALS AND FOR MOST OF THESE CHEMICALS WE’RE JUST NOT SEEING THEM...SO MAYBE THE BIGGEST SURPRISE IS THAT THESE LEVELS ARE SO LOW.” - CHESTER SPICER - SPECIAL RESEARCH LEADER, BATTELLE

THE INVENTORY NUMBERS SHOW THE ENTIRE D-O-D CONTRIBUTES LESS THAN ONE QUARTER OF ONE PERCENT OF THE POLLUTION REPORTED TO E-P-A. PUTTING THAT WITH THE DATA FROM THE AIR

EMISSIONS STUDY WILL HELP THE ARMY - AND ITS CRITICS -
UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AND IS NOT RELEASED WHEN SOLDIERS TRAIN.
JAVIER HERNANDEZ, WASHINGTON.

ANCHOR: JAVIER, IS THERE ANY WAY THE ARMY CAN REDUCE THE
AMOUNT OF CHEMICALS IT RELEASES?

JAVIER: WELL IF YOU LOOK AT THE CHEMICALS THE ARMY REPORTED IN
1994, IT REDUCED ITS RELEASES BY MORE THAN 60 PERCENT BETWEEN
1994 AND 1999. THE ARMY IS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO CUT AN
ADDITIONAL 40 PERCENT BY 2006, WHICH IS QUITE A CHALLENGE. BUT
OFFICIALS EXPECT IMPROVEMENTS IN MUNITIONS DESIGN,
MANUFACTURING AND POLLUTION PREVENTION PROCESSES WILL GET
US THERE.