



Fact Sheet

305TH AIR MOBILITY WING (AMC)

U.S. AIR FORCE

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
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BOMARC FACILITY CLEANUP

BOMARC (Boeing Michigan Aeronautical Research Center) was a Cold War-Era Air Force nuclear missile site. The missiles were supersonic ground-to-air weapons designed to destroy attacking aircraft and airborne missiles. The facility, one of eight located around the country, east of Route 539 in Plumstead Township, N.J., was operated by the Air Force from 1959 until 1972.

On June 7, 1960, a fire destroyed a nuclear warhead-equipped missile in shelter 204 at the BOMARC facility. The accident released plutonium (radioactive material) into the environment. Heat from the fire and fire suppression activities facilitated dispersion of plutonium over a 7-acre area.

After the fire, the Air Force took steps to ensure the environment and the local community were effectively protected. The shelter and apron areas were washed down, spray paint was applied inside and outside the shelter to affix contamination, and a protective overburden of four inches of reinforced concrete was poured over the asphalt in front of shelter 204 to further immobilize the contamination.

Since 1960, several different agencies conducted surveys around the BOMARC accident site to ensure the protective measure were effective. The Institute for Environmental Safety and Occupational Health Risk Analysis, the Army Environmental Hygiene Agency, U.S. Army Radiation Team, Ballistics Research Laboratory and several other agencies conducted numerous surveys. Radiological surveys were conducted on 18 different occasions between 1960 and 1987 and all results showed the concrete and asphalt overburden was effective. Additionally, water sampling in the late 1980s, early 1990s and in 2000 showed the contamination was not in the groundwater.

In the late 1980s, public interest in the site raised congressional concern. In response, the AF committed funding for investigation and cleanup of this medium-risk site. The AF signed a record of decision in November 1992, that selected removal of contaminated soils and structures as the preferred remedial alternative.

The contract for removal was finally awarded to Duratek Inc. of Columbia Md. and its subcontractor, IT. In Spring, 2002 work began to remove the contaminated soil and building debris, concrete and asphalt. The material is then transported via truck through Fort Dix and Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, then by rail to Utah for disposal in a Nuclear Regulatory Commission-licensed facility.

The Air Force, Army and Navy, along with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection are working together to ensure removal, transportation and disposal of the contaminated materials meet or exceed regulatory requirements, and to ensure their safe handling and movement.

To date, approximately \$22.1 million has been spent to remove and dispose of 20,800 cubic yards of soil and debris from the site. The investigation phase is continuing to determine if future remediation efforts are required in additional areas near the site.

The Air Force is committed to working with the community to protect America's natural resources and preserve the environment and is doing everything possible to expedite closure of this site, prevent exposure and ensure safe conditions.

(Current as of February 2004)