



Air Force Civil Engineer Center Chanute Environmental FAQs

Q: What is the status of environmental cleanup at the former Chanute Air Force Base?

A: The Air Force and its regulatory partners, United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), have been working together since the 1980s to address environmental cleanup at the former Chanute AFB in Rantoul, IL. Currently, cleanup decisions are complete for all but four of the nearly 300 total sites at Chanute, and the Air Force and IEPA are on track to complete the cleanup decisions for these last four sites this summer. All but five of the total sites are being cleaned up to allow unrestricted (i.e., residential) use. The remaining five sites include four landfills and a former fire training area that will have land use restrictions.

Q: Why is the cleanup taking a long time to complete?

A: Even using the best available technology, the removal of contaminants in the soil and groundwater is a time-consuming process. The cleanup process is managed to methodically achieve cleanup while avoiding unneeded expense to taxpayers, and occurs with oversight by numerous regulatory agencies to protect human health and the environment.

Q: Why isn't Chanute considered a Superfund Site?

A: The terms "Superfund" and "NPL Site" are often used synonymously. The term "Superfund" is a designation given by the US EPA to abandoned hazardous waste sites. Chanute is not an abandoned site but rather a closed federal facility. While the US EPA did propose Chanute, the base was never listed on the NPL. However, that does not change the Air Force's requirements to clean up Chanute to regulatory standards, and Chanute follows the same requirements as if it was an NPL site. Because the former Chanute Air Force Base is a federal site, the Air Force is responsible for completing cleanup activities in accordance with all applicable State and Federal laws.

Q: Is the water on the Chanute property safe to drink? Where does it come from?

A: Yes, the drinking water in the area is safe. The Air Force has a rigorous groundwater monitoring program in place to ensure contaminants being cleaned up at Chanute do not impact drinking water supplies. This cleanup and monitoring program is overseen and regulated by Illinois EPA. Additionally, the Village of Rantoul is required by federal regulations to test its drinking water supplies and provide an annual drinking water report. The 2011 report can be found at www.village.rantoul.il.us/DocumentCenter/View/22289 and it states that "The Village of Rantoul's drinking water meets or surpasses all federal and state drinking-water standards."



Q: Why was bottled water provided several years ago if the water is safe to drink?

A: The Air Force did provide bottled water as a precautionary measure until thorough investigation determined the drinking water to be safe and therefore these precautions were not needed. This investigation and evaluation was conducted with consultation and approval from regulatory agencies, to include US EPA, Illinois EPA, Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Q: What about the soil? Is it hazardous?

A: Since the cleanup began in the 1980s, the Air Force has gathered extensive information about the locations where hazardous waste was dumped, leaked or spilled. Contaminated soil sites have been cleaned to regulatory levels that allow unrestricted (i.e., residential) use except for four landfills and a former fire training area that will have land use restrictions.

Q: I work on the former Chanute Air Force Base. Does that mean I'm more at risk to be exposed to contamination?

A: No, people living and working at and near the former base are safe. The Air Force and regulatory agencies were required by law to go through a rigorous evaluation and approval process for all sites prior to allowing reuse of the former base. Most sites impacted by contamination have been cleaned up, and those sites where cleanup is still ongoing, the contaminants are at low levels and beneath the surface so there is no exposure to workers in the area.

Q: Was Agent Orange used at Chanute?

A: There has been no evidence that Agent Orange was ever used or stored at Chanute. There have been some erroneous assertions within the community regarding the use of a commonly used weed control herbicide (2,4-D). The chemical 2,4-D is not Agent Orange. Chanute Air Force Base also procured another commercially available herbicide, 2,4,5-T, which is also not Agent Orange. Agent Orange was never a commercially available chemical and was not used or stored at Chanute.

Q: Is Heritage Lake safe?

A: Early and limited investigations at Heritage Lake, an artificial lake constructed in 1984 near Landfills 2 and 3, revealed the presence of mercury-contaminated fish. Mercury is a naturally-occurring element in the environment, but as a precautionary measure, the Air Force initially restricted fishing at Heritage Lake to "catch-and-release" only. However, an extensive remedial investigation completed in 2007 showed that the low levels of contamination did not present an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment. Heritage Lake is once again open for recreation and fishing with no restrictions on use related to Air Force activities. Illinois has established fish advisories for certain bodies of water in the state. Information on the advisories is available at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/fishadvisory/index.htm>

Q: Where can I get more information about the cleanup?

A: Please visit our website at <http://www.afcec.af.mil/brac/chanute/index.asp> for information about the former Chanute AFB. The site contains cleanup information, Restoration Advisory Board materials, community newsletters and additional informational materials.

Q: Where can I access Chanute environmental reports?

A: Please visit the Administrative Record (AR) at the following link: <http://afcec.publicadmin-record.us.af.mil/Search.aspx>. At the top left of the page, select BRAC and scroll down to Chanute. Also, copies of reports dated 2008 and later are available in the Information Repository at the Rantoul Public Library, 106 W. Flessner Ave., Rantoul, Illinois 61866.

For More Information

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(Current as of May 2014)