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News Release

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Corps officials to install added safety structure at the Spring Valley site

Baltimore – Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in coordination with the D.C. Department of Health and the EPA Region III, announced today that a special metal structure would be installed at the site of the Corps' current excavation as an added safety measure.

Used previously in the investigation of the Spring Valley neighborhood to remove World War I-era military items, this pre-fabricated metal structure will be built over the site where the Corps is digging to remove a burial pit discovered in May 2001 at one property on Glenbrook Road.

Excavation operations have been halted until workers complete the installation of the structure. Prior to the work stoppage, several ordnance items, glass bottles and miscellaneous glassware have been safely removed, containerized and transported offsite to be tested.

While none of the ordnance items found to date in the Spring Valley investigation have been explosively configured, Army ordnance experts want to ensure that all available safety measures are taken. Because historical evidence did not indicate the presence of ordnance at this burial site, the investigation of this pit was aimed at searching for buried chemical agent. Although the current containment tent is capable of safely filtering chemical agents that might be released during excavation, the metal structure is certified to prevent the release of chemical agent in the event of an accidental detonation.

A similar metal structure was used during the Corps' investigation of two burial pits at the adjacent property. Between March 1999 and March 2000, 288 ordnance items were safely removed from the site without incidence. Fourteen contained chemical warfare agent.

As the investigation of the Spring Valley neighborhood proceeds, Army officials will continue to take every precaution to protect health and safety of both residents and workers.