

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will this Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment (EA/OEA) delay defueling?

The EA is currently on plan. JTF-RH does not anticipate that NEPA compliance will affect the defueling timeline. JTF-RH is preparing an EA/OEA for the defueling of Red Hill. This EA/OEA and resulting decision document is expected to be completed by Aug. 31, 2023. The EA/OEA is being prepared concurrently with all preparatory actions necessary for defueling to begin.

2. Will a spill during the gravity-based defueling operation impact drinking water?

DoD developed the Red Hill Defueling Plan and Supplements 1A, 1B, and 2 to address system deficiencies, identify repairs, develop defueling procedures, and implement training and spill prevention measures. The plan also includes preparedness measures for spill containment and response. Measures required by this plan will reduce the likelihood and severity of a spill during the defueling operation, so that the risk of a spill impacting underground sources of drinking water would be considered highly unlikely. The EPA and DOH are providing oversight of the defueling process.

3. Why is West Oahu identified as a potential fuel receiving location?

The West Oahu receiving location is an existing contractor-owned and contractor-operated bulk storage facility capable of delivering fuel directly to JBPHH via commercial pipeline to meet the fuel needs of DoD ships and aircraft. This facility is located in Kapolei in an industrial area commonly known as Campbell Industrial Park.

4. Would a spill at West Oahu storage facility impact underground sources of drinking water?

No. The West Oahu storage facility is located below the Underground Injection Control (UIC) line, meaning that these locations are outside of areas identified by DOH as underground sources of drinking water. Practically, this means that a fuel spill at the West Oahu receiving location would not have the potential to impact underground aquifers that are used as sources of drinking water. For maps depicting areas below the UIC line, see: <https://health.hawaii.gov/sdwb/underground-injection-control-program/>.

5. Would the gravity-based defueling action remove ALL the fuel from RHBFSF?

The main defueling activity includes removal of the flowable fuel from the RHBFSF's 14 in-service underground storage tanks, associated pipelines, and four surge tanks. This activity will conclude once all fuel that can be removed through gravity draining from the vast majority of the facility has been removed (~99.85% of fuel). The residual fuel consists of smaller volumes of fuel that will remain in low points, bends, flanges, and valves in the pipelines, to be removed during the next phase by other non-gravity draining means.

6. What is JTF-RH doing to ensure defueling won't cause more contamination of groundwater?

JTF-RH is working diligently to ensure there are no leaks during the defueling process by completing identified repairs, replacing degraded components, and repairing damage from the May 2021 surge event. Additionally, JTF-RH is making modifications to the system to prevent surge events during defueling. The JTF-RH website provides an online public dashboard showing the number of repairs completed, inspected by a third party, and approved by regulators. On May 16, 2023, JTF-RH published Defueling Supplement 2, which includes several measures that will be implemented to protect against spills, including detailed plans for immediate actions in response to a potential spill. These plans have been designed to effectively manage risk, to maximize preparation, and to prevent further mishaps. JTF-RH conducts frequent training of these plans and conducts coordinated spill response drills to ensure we are ready to defuel safely and to effectively respond to a potential spill to prevent further groundwater contamination.

7. Will the proposed defueling action include removal of aqueous film-forming foams (AFFF) (e.g., fire suppressant chemicals) at RHBFSF?

No, the Proposed Action does not include removal of AFFF. During defueling, JTF-RH and Fed Fire will conduct a layered approach to fire suppression using a manned fire watch in conjunction with the existing fire water sprinklers and Fed Fire emergency response. A fire watch, on-station throughout defueling operations, will employ dry chemical fire extinguishers as an immediate response in parallel to the operational water sprinkler system in auto mode, and ahead of arrival of Fed Fire. The dry chemical fire extinguishing agent is potassium bicarbonate. The Defueling Supplement 2 contains a more detailed description of how this layered approach will be postured to respond to any fire. The Navy will accomplish removal of the AFFF systems during the closure phase after defueling is complete.

8. With the EPA proposed Consent Order and DOH Emergency Order in place, why are JTF-RH and DLA conducting NEPA analysis of defueling? Why is this necessary?

On March 7, 2022, the Secretary of Defense ordered the defueling and permanent closure of the RHBFSF. While defueling the facility is nondiscretionary, JTF-RH and DLA have discretion on the methods for relocating the fuel, and where the fuel will go. Under NEPA, Federal agencies must evaluate the potential environmental effects of major actions that may have an impact on the human environment. Public concern and interest in the proposed defueling effort was also an important consideration in JTF-RH and DLA's decision to initiate an EA/OEA. The EA/OEA process includes the opportunity for public review and comment on the Proposed Action and alternatives. Public involvement is an important aspect of the NEPA process and JTF-RH and DLA is required to fully consider public input in the analysis of this action, and its decision-making process.