

2015 Ammunition Hall of Fame Inductee

BYRON MORRIS



Mr. Byron E. Morris was a brilliant, dedicated, and innovative health physicist who managed the Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command (AMCCOM, now the Joint Munitions Command (JMC)) radiation safety program, which included the Department of Army Low-Level Radioactive Waste (LLRW) Disposal Program. Upon assignment to take over the Army LLRW program in 1979, Mr. Morris developed it into a world class organization and pioneered its structure and procedures still in use today. The Army, Department of Defense (DoD), and many other federal agencies have benefited from his leadership, guidance, and technical knowledge in the proper removal and disposal of every type of LLRW stream found around the world.

Mr. Morris graduated from St. Ambrose College in Davenport, IA, in 1954 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Math and Physics. He served with the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss from 1954-56, including support to the Nike Missile Battalion at the White Sands Missile Range. He began his Civilian career with General Dynamics Nuclear Research and Development Division at Fort Worth, TX, from 1956-70 running nuclear experimental and analytical projects. Among those were the “Small Boy” nuclear bomb test at the Nevada Test Site as the Radiation Monitor for a team investigating shielding properties of Army tanks; was advisor to the US/Germany Joint Design Team for enhancement of nuclear radiation protection for the Main Battle Tank; and analyzed the family of F-111 aircraft for radiation protection for the Air Force. Then, as Research Scientist for the Rock Island Arsenal, he analyzed nuclear vulnerability and survivability of U.S. Army weapons systems for the Weapons Command (WECOM), Army Armament Command (ARMCOM) and Armament Materiel Command (ARRCOM).

As Radiation Protection Officer (RPO) for AMCCOM, Mr. Morris oversaw all operations involving radioactive materials and radiation producing devices at the Army’s ammunition plants, ammunition depots, and arsenals. He also wrote and managed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licenses. The scope of his responsibility was wide and deep, and impacted operations throughout the Army and DoD.

The Army radiation safety community knows Mr. Morris as the founder of the LLRW program. He centralized operations and instituted procedures as a one-man team in the early 1980s. The Army had experienced shipping violations at commercial LLRW burial sites that threatened access for disposal, so he developed corrective actions with intensive quality control. This established the Army program as premier within DoD, which was recognized by a General Accounting Office report in 1990. The report recommended the Army program be designated as a DoD Executive Agent for LLRW disposal, which was instituted in 1992 and remains so today.

Servicing hundreds of sites spread around the world, Mr. Morris recognized the need for consolidation of LLRW by trained experts. He later set up a similar sites that played an effective role for collection of LLRW generated during Operation Desert Storm.

The DoD first used depleted uranium (DU) munitions in combat during Operation Desert Storm. Following the conflict, he spearheaded the identification and development of corrective actions, many of which were implemented to great effect years later for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Operation Desert Storm marked the first deployment of Civilian health physicists into a combat theater to provide direct support in handling and collection of contaminated equipment on the ground. Mr. Morris improvised solutions to the difficulty of handling large, contaminated equipment in extreme conditions, but noted the requirements for future operations. Upon his return, the LLRW program stood up the rapid response Army Contaminated Equipment Retrograde Team (ACERT), which formalized the response capabilities for combat scenarios and subsequently deployed and operated for nine years during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Upon establishment of the Executive Agency, Mr. Morris led the rapid expansion of the program to a team of technical and financial experts servicing all DoD services and other federal agencies on LLRW shipping and disposal, environmental clean ups, and radiological surveys. One way he reformed operations to meet the increased program needs was to change contract methods. He replaced the single large business contractor with several disadvantaged, minority-owned small businesses spread across the country. This greatly expanded the program's capabilities and put contractor support in close proximity to most military installations. It also benefited the contractors to establish their work history and mature into successful larger companies.

Mr. Morris took advantage of the economy of scale that came with servicing all DoD facilities worldwide by establishing regional pick up runs. This applied to Outside Continental United States (OCONUS) as well as CONUS regions and again, is still in effect today.

These efforts directly supported Warfighters by completing the life cycle of materials used in their weapons systems, vehicles, and equipment; the production and demilitarization of munitions; testing of weapons systems and munitions; military research and development; and medical procedures. Mr. Morris established systems to ease the management burdens for the users of radioactive materials, allowing them to focus on other work.

The Army LLRW disposal program and the DoD Executive Agency for LLRW have a long history of excellence in the safe, compliant, and cost effective management of DoD LLRW. Mr. Byron E. Morris envisioned and built the foundation of effective and enduring operations to the benefit of all of DoD. During his 23 years of federal service, Mr. Morris' professionalism and efforts reflected great credit upon himself, the AMCCOM, the Army Materiel Command, and the U.S. Army. Mr Morris was recently honored by the approval to name the Low Level Radioactive Waste Facility at Rock Island Arsenal, the Morris Consolidation Facility.