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CBRN course sets standards for radiological transport

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Fort Leonard Wood is now one of three Department of Defense installations owning a course certified to teach the packing and shipping of radioactive hazardous materials in all modes of transportation.

Students of the first Radiological Packing Course class, since certification in March, are learning how to properly identify, classify, package, mark, label and document packages containing radiological material for transportation in accordance with national and international regulations.

“We (U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School) are the proponent for radiological safety in the Army,” said Eric Hanson, Edwin R. Bradley Radiological Laboratories director. “We’ve been teaching radiological awareness for years, with safety as a prerequisite.”

The Rad Lab is where students, who took part in the course June 15 to 18, conducted hands-on training with actual radioactive packages.

“The development and implementation of this course at USACBRNS will significantly reduce the wait time for DOD personnel to attend the course,” Hanson said.

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He noted the school was approached by the DoD Hazardous Material Packaging Working Group through the office of the Army's Radiation Safety to develop a packaging and shipping radiological Class 7 hazardous material course.

According to Hanson, the new course is "four days of intense focus on federal, state, local and international laws on transportation of radioactive hazardous materials by land, sea, rail and military air."

Fort Leonard Wood's course was recently integrated into the Defense Transportation Regulation. The regulation states that all military, civilians and contractors who participate in the movement of regulated HAZMAT must comply with rules governing the safe transportation for modes of transportation.

Previously, there were only two locations that taught the course — Communications-Electronics Command, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Yorktown, Virginia.

"The Army's 80-hour, two-week course teaches all classes of hazardous material transportation, but they don't teach radiological," said Robert Derr, course leader and deputy director of the Rad Lab. He is referring to the Army's Technical Transportation of HAZMAT course held at the Defense Ammunition Center, McAlester, Oklahoma.

"There is nothing really out there that teaches what we teach," said Derr, also the course creator and native of Columbus, Wisconsin. "We cover all modes of transportation; whereas, the other courses only pertain to highway transportation."

Derr's yearlong quest to develop the class began after the safety office council determined there was a lack of certified people to package and ship radioactive material.

According to Hanson, material could be instruments or equipment that use ionizing radiation such as chemical-agent monitors, calibrators for radiation detection equipment or radiological hazardous waste.

Derr explained that shipping any equipment outside a unit, during a military movement or deployment, requires an individual certified in radiological packing and shipping.

"If it's equipment that has radiation, it is considered hazardous material," Derr said. "Someone certified must do the proper paperwork, labeling with proper markings and do the dangerous goods declaration forms."

Course student and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeremy Snow, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, said the course is fantastic, and he's learning a lot.

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“We ship a lot of radioactive items, and have to make sure we’re well informed of the regulations. This course will give us the authorization to correctly do our jobs,” said the Warner Robins, Georgia native.

“I want to make sure they know the proper procedures,” Derr said. “They can’t just put a radioactive package in a vehicle and transport it without the proper blocking and bracing, paperwork, markings and a placard on the outside of the vehicle.”

Failure to follow radiological transportation guidelines is more than violating regulations and incurring fines. “It’s about safety,” Derr emphasized. “If any of the radioactive isotopes are leaking or outside the box, it could lead to getting someone overexposed. Safety is very important.”

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command’s U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only four reception stations in the Army, and the Army’s largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
