



South Dakota Ellsworth AFB

Facility and Location

Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB) is a World War II era installation that initially served as a bomber training base and became a strategic bomber and missile base throughout the Cold War. As a Strategic Air Command installation, Ellsworth AFB has hosted two generations of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The Minuteman I and Minuteman II ICBMs were operational at Ellsworth AFB from 1963 to 1991. The Ellsworth AFB Minuteman launch facilities and launch control facilities were located north, west, and east of the base. The only launch of Minuteman missiles from an operational silo took place on March 1, 1965 from launch facility N-02 and was limited to about two miles. Other historic activities at Ellsworth AFB included the use of solid rocket motors containing perchlorate and prior demilitarization activities involving open burn/open detonation.

In 1992, the Air Force reassigned Ellsworth AFB to the newly activated Air Combat Command. After less than a year under the new command, the 28th's mission changed from that of strategic bombardment to one of worldwide conventional munitions delivery.

Media Sampled and Findings

Drinking Water — Prior to 2007, two of two samples detected perchlorate at 0.07 and 0.1 ppb.

Groundwater — In 2009, 14 of 17 samples detected perchlorate from 0.16 to 2.3 ppb. Prior to 2007, 12 groundwater samples from various monitoring wells reported no detection. At the Badlands Bombing Range, 2 of 15 samples detected perchlorate at 0.55 and 1.2 ppb.

Appropriate Actions

Administrative Rule of South Dakota 74:54:01:05 states that potential pollutants must be non-detectable in groundwater until a maximum contaminant level or health advisory level is set by EPA. The installation is currently awaiting further direction from the state. All samples were below the EPA and DoD Preliminary Remediation Goal of 15 ppb.

Following the current Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) munitions and explosives of concern Removal Action at the Badlands Bombing Range, a Feasibility Study (FS) of the ERP site at Operable Unit 11 is planned to assess both the residual explosive and contamination risk. The FS will address perchlorate, but there has been no determination that additional sampling will be required to complete the study.