Army Dumped Explosive Waste

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — The state has forbidden the U.S. Army from sending any more explosive wastes to Chemical Waste Management’s hazardous waste site in Calcasieu Parish, where two explosions have occurred.

The state Department of Environmental Quality also told the Army it may still be subject to fines of $25,000 a day for previously sending explosive devices to the disposal facility, which DEQ says is not licensed to receive such materials.

A spokesman for Chemical Waste Management said the company had not agreed to receive live explosives from the Army.

Gerald Walter, attorney for the firm, said a smoke grenade ignited about a week ago when the buried drum containing it was run over by a bulldozer at the site.

In February, a similar device ignited and caused a fire in a nearby mixing basin for chemical wastes.

“We can’t afford to have disposal of explosives at our hazardous waste sites,” DEQ Secretary Pat Norton said after issuing the order to the Army and a similar order to Chemical Waste Management, instructing the firm to receive no more such materials.

The materials came from a cleanup site at the Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas, the attorney said.

While Chemical Waste Management was involved in that cleanup, the firm was not allowed to go into the bunker where the materials that later caused the problem were stored, he said.

Those materials were put in drums by the Army and turned over to the firm for disposal, he said.

The recent incident apparently did not involve a triggering device, but was caused by a drum being snagged on a bulldozer blade. That resulted in friction, which caused a heat buildup that set off the powder, he said.

The company has elected to put a four-foot thick, clay cap over the area where the arsenal wastes are buried to prevent any more incidents of that type, he said.

No one was injured in either incident, Walter said.