

# DISCOVERY



The Development of Combat Power and Efficiency

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Through the Many Facets of Aerospace Medicine

## Study shows low death rates for Kelly Air Force Base workers

SAN ANTONIO (AFPN) — Results of a newly released mortality study of workers at the former Kelly Air Force Base show there were significantly fewer deaths from all causes than would have been expected using either U.S. or Texas reference rates for comparison.

The study, published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, investigated the causes of death from among the almost 32,000 civilians who worked for one year or more at Kelly AFB between 1981 and 2000. It was commissioned by Air Force Materiel Command to address concerns about possible health threats to workers from materials used at Kelly AFB.

The Air Force Institute for Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Risk Analysis at Brooks; the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District; the Texas Department of Health; the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; and the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association monitored the design and progress of the study conducted by Applied Epidemiology Inc., an Amherst, Mass., firm.

"Overall, the findings were consistent with a generally healthy workforce," said Lt. Col. Kenneth Cox, chief of AFIERA's risk assessment division.

See Study, Page 3



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Anita Schroeder

## Rainy days and memories

The somber air surrounding the Traveling Vietnam Memorial attracted many visitors like these during the Veterans Day tribute in Natalia, Texas. Col. John Bowley,

311th Mission Support Group Commander, spoke during the city's Air Force Day event about military heroes and their families who serve our nation.

## City-Base's first haz-mat exercise tests emergency responders' skills

By Rudy Purificato  
311th Human Systems Wing

The first hazardous material exercise during the Brooks City-Base era not only tested first responders' capabilities Nov. 12, but forged another important partnership between the Air Force and city of San Antonio.

The event, which featured a simulated chemical spill in a Bldg. 140 laboratory, marked the first time that City-Base and city fire and police department personnel had worked together during a base exercise designed to safeguard the Brooks community.

"I want to thank the city of San Antonio for participating in this exercise. This is the first exercise as a City-Base in which the San Antonio Fire Department's Haz-Mat Team responded to a hazardous material incident on base," said Col. Stuart Cowles, 311th Human Systems Wing vice commander.

Cowles praised everyone involved in the planning and execution of this exercise which helped identify key issues that, once resolved, will further enhance emergency personnel's collective capability to mitigate critical incidents here.

The City-Base transition provided the impetus for this exercise that was jointly conceived by Lt. Col. Susan Loveland, 311th Human Systems Wing Inspector General, and Keith

**“ It's exciting to see the cooperation that everyone expressed. I believe we raised the level of awareness for emergency response to City-Base. ”**

Lt. Col. Susan Loveland  
311th Human Systems Wing  
Inspector General

Muhlestein, City-Base environmental manager.

"We were aware that the (City-Base) conveyance created concerns about communications between ongoing missions and emergency response," said Muhlestein, adding, "Knowing that the base fire department had moved out, it became my responsibility to make sure that hazardous material is managed properly."

In planning the exercise, Loveland and Muhlestein knew in advance some of the issues that would be raised when emergency responders arrived on base. Communications became a

key issue, Muhlestein said, explaining that fire departments typically use radio frequencies exclusive to them as a precaution against interference. Amando Perez, from the 311th HSW Safety Office, worked closely with the team to identify and mitigate risks associated with the exercise.

Another identified issue is emergency responders' access to buildings, floor plans and information about facility contents primarily involving potentially hazardous material or equipment. During a command post exercise outbrief, San Antonio Fire Department District Fire Chief Ralph Medina suggested the creation of a central repository for the base Material Safety Data Sheet inventory. Each MSDS specifies the chemical composition of hazardous materials and includes guidelines on Personal Protective Equipment required to handle such toxic substances.

"The state requires the MSDS be kept in work areas for worker safety. However, the MSDS are difficult to access when haz-mat teams respond to (contaminated) areas where these sheets are stored," explained Muhlestein, noting that the solution is maintaining MSDS duplicates in a central location.

To underscore the potentially deadly consequences of hazardous

See Haz-mat, Page 5

### INSIDE



White House 'chef' brings recipes home to Brooks Club

Page

15



'Fastest human on base' ready to break new record

Page

19