



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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Department of Health conditionally approves Red Hill defueling plan

HONOLULU, HI – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) conditionally approved the Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH) defueling plan, setting the framework to begin defueling about 104 million gallons of fuel from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

“We value the community’s voice and EPA’s partnership to get us to this point. Today’s conditional approval is an important step forward to defuel Red Hill as quickly and safely as possible,” said Deputy Director of Environmental Health Kathleen Ho. “The Joint Task Force must still complete several important steps before DOH will allow defueling to begin, and we will continue to oversee all work with safety as our top priority.”

Conditional approval means that DOH’s approval is contingent on the Joint Task Force’s ability to address DOH’s comments and questions on the defueling plan, successfully complete repairs and other tasks, and submit additional plans laying out operations to remove fuel from the Red Hill underground storage tanks, surge tanks and related pipelines.

DOH continues to review these items in phases as they are submitted in order to expedite progress safely. This approach also allows DOH to hold the Navy accountable for the start date for defueling the main tanks, which is now October 2023.

Before allowing defueling to begin, DOH will need to approve the following Joint Task Force deliverables:

- All repairs to the Red Hill facility and pipelines.
- The operational plan to defuel surge tanks located at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, which are separate from the main Red Hill tanks.

- The operational plan for pipeline repacking, which entails filling fuel back into the repaired lines and is a precursor to defueling.
- The operational plan for defueling the main Red Hill tanks and the tank bottoms.
- The operational plan for pipeline unpacking, which entails safely removing fuel from the pipelines by gravity following defueling.
- The operational plan for removing the estimated 100,000 to 400,000 gallons of fuel that the Joint Task Force anticipates will be left in the facility's pipelines and surge tanks following the completion of defueling by gravity.

In October 2022, DOH conditionally approved the unpacking of the Red Hill pipelines, which allowed fuel to be removed so repairs could be conducted. The repairs will be completed by U.S. Department of Defense contractors, reviewed by JTF-RH, vetted by a third party and submitted to DOH and EPA for final approval.

DOH also continues to observe JTF-RH's response exercises, which help to ensure that staff is prepared to carry out effective response procedures for spill, fire and other possible scenarios.

[Click here to read the DOH conditional approval letter.](#)

[Click here to read the Joint Task Force defueling plan submissions.](#)

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