



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

News Release

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Public Invited to Provide Comment on Fort Detrick's Air Quality Permit Application

Comment Period Extended to January 6, 2026

FREDERICK, Md. – Members of the community are encouraged to participate in the comment period hosted by the Maryland Department of the Environment for an Air Quality Permit-to-Construct application submitted by US Army Garrison Fort Detrick. The application is about the air quality permit necessary for construction related to two medical waste incinerators and a natural gas-fired generator at Fort Detrick.

The Maryland Department of the Environment regulates air quality and requires permits for activities that may impact air quality. The public has the opportunity to provide input on whether Fort Detrick's permit should be approved.

"Here in Frederick County, we know that community voices are essential to developing thoughtful solutions," **said County Executive Jessica Fitzwater**. "Public participation in the comment period is vital to ensure that our community's voice is heard. Together, we can help influence critical decisions that impact our health, environment, and quality of life."

An initial public hearing was held on October 29 to record testimony on the draft permit. A recording of the hearing is available on the [Maryland Department of the Environment's YouTube page](#). The application, draft permit conditions, and supporting documents are available on the [Maryland Department of the Environment's website](#).

Due to a request for an extension from a coalition of elected representatives led by Delegate Kris Fair, the comment period has been extended to **January 6, 2025**. Written comments may be sent to Shannon Heafey via email at Shannon.Heafey@Maryland.gov.

Senator Karen Lewis Young stated: "Community distrust of Ft. Detrick's experiments and research has long been a concern. In 2009, a study from the National Research Council showed that Ft. Detrick had not taken the appropriate actions to prevent groundwater contamination. As a result, Frederick formed the Containment Lab Community Advisory Committee (CLCAC) to foster two-way communication between the public and the operators of the high containment labs. As a charter member of CLCAC, I found gathering information from Ft. Detrick regarding community interests to be a challenge.

“Given this history, it is essential that the community have a seat at the table with respect to the potential operation of any medical waste incinerator. This is a matter of public concern, which makes public input vital.”

Frederick County Council Member M.C. Keegan-Ayer said: “Ft. Detrick is surrounded on several sides by communities identified as disadvantaged and thus qualifying for additional analysis under the state’s Environmental Justice law passed in 2022. Given the significant impact these communities might suffer should an accident occur with either or both incinerators, it is imperative that the lines of communication be well established and fully utilized. When there are mishaps on base, the City and County governments must be informed immediately, and then be allowed to make decisions regarding notification of the public for their safety.

“It is essential these specific communities are aware this application is being considered by MDE. It is critical the residents fully comprehend the potential impacts these incinerators may have on their health and well-being. It is imperative that the leadership of the Garrison at Ft. Detrick engage in rebuilding meaningful, two-way communication with the City and County. I am concerned these residents were not notified this application was filed, and they could provide input. It is for this reason I requested an extension, to allow residents living in the communities surrounding the Garrison to find out more about this proposal and provide their input.”

The City of Frederick Mayor Michael O’Connor said: “When projects of this scale are considered, it’s important that the public has the chance to review the details and weigh in. I urge residents to take part in the comment process to make sure their voice is part of the record.”

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