



Cleanup agreement will lead to a new middle school on military base

The state of California and a school district are preparing a plan that would remove toxic chemicals at a proposed school site at China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station near Ridgecrest.

Evaluating prospective school sites to ensure the protection of public health and the environment is a primary mission of the state Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). In the last decade, the Department has overseen cleanup projects that paved the way for 21,000 new classrooms serving half a million students.

In this case, [Sierra Sands Unified School District](#) agreed to lease vacant property along the southern boundary of the military base for a new \$39.5 million Murray Middle School to replace one that is 50 years old. Navy homes occupied the site until they were demolished in 2002. In May 2015, the district signed a cleanup agreement with DTSC.

Elevated levels of pesticides were found in shallow soil on the northern portion of the property – most likely from termite and ant control. There is no immediate health risk because the pesticides are underground and not readily accessible, but the school district, under DTSC’s supervision, will have to remove an estimated 20,077 cubic yards of contaminated soil before the property can be developed.

The new campus, which could break ground in the fall, would include four one-story buildings, athletic fields and a basketball court. Murray Middle School is one of dozens of [school-related cleanups](#) that DTSC is supervising.

