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United States Army Center for Environmental Health Research Scientists Win Award

The Mid-Atlantic Region of the Federal Laboratory Consortium this year presented the Regional Excellence in Technology Transfer Award to a team of scientists led by Mr. Tommy Shedd, Research Biologist, U.S. Army Center for Environmental Health Research (USACEHR). Other team members were Mr. Mark Widder, Research Biologist, USACEHR and Dr. William van der Schalie, Biomonitoring Program Director, USACEHR. The award was for work on “Apparatus and Method for Automated Biomonitoring of Water Quality.”

To help protect soldiers from exposure to drinking water supplies contaminated with toxic industrial and agricultural chemicals, the U.S. Army has developed an aquatic biomonitor that continuously monitors water using live fish. The continuous test rapidly identifies toxic conditions caused by a wide range of chemicals or chemical mixtures. Electrical signals generated by the body movements of fish are monitored. Should abnormal activity be detected, the computer notifies appropriate personnel using an autodialer and takes a water sample for future analysis using an automated, refrigerated sampler. Biomonitor data can be remotely accessed for evaluation, and the system requires only about four hours per week of maintenance. The system responds within an hour to most chemicals at acutely toxic concentrations.

By providing the ability to continuously monitor water quality and provide rapid identification of developing toxic conditions, the USACEHR aquatic biomonitor significantly improves the Army’s ability to protect military personnel from contamination and offers the same capability for civilian users, including water utilities.

One of the most coveted awards in the field of technology transfer, the FLC awards for Excellence in Technology Transfer recognize laboratory employees who have accomplished outstanding work in the process of transferring Federally-developed technology to the marketplace. The award was made on September 15 at the region’s annual meeting.

The Federal Laboratory Consortium is comprised of the technology transfer offices of all of the Federal laboratories throughout the country while its Mid-Atlantic Region focuses on the 70 Federal laboratories in DC, DE, MD, PA, VA and WV.