

National Explosives Task Force Awareness Bulletin October 8, 2014

Munitions at Recycling Facilities

On August 25th, 2014, an explosion took the lives of two employees at a recycling facility in Granite City, IL. Preliminary reports indicate the cause was the accidental detonation of a live military mortar. The source of the mortar and cause of the explosion has yet to be determined. The National Explosives Task Force is disseminating this bulletin as a reminder of the continuing issue and inherent dangers of munitions being processed at recycling facilities.

Military munitions and related metals are being collected from Department of Defense (DoD) ranges and delivered to recycling facilities by DoD authorized companies. Unauthorized individuals attracted to the potential profits of recycling high-density, high value metal have also illegally collected these materials from DoD ranges and sold them to metal salvage companies. Despite DoD safety policies and procedures, live military munitions have been discovered mixed in with unrelated scrap metal, dummy rounds, and in some cases, within scrap metal bins marked "Certified Inert." However, the path these munitions followed to arrive at a recycling facility is not clear. Military color coding (i.e., blue coloring used on practice or training ordnance) should NOT be used as a reliable indicator that a specific ordnance item does not contain explosive material. Many practice rounds contain explosive components. The continued presence of munitions at recycling facilities poses a significant explosive safety hazard to its workers and the public.

The following are examples of munitions discovered at recycling facilities:



Figure 1

- 3/29/2014 – El Paso, Texas. An 84mm Carl Gustav Round (anti-tank round) was recovered from a recycling facility. (Figure 1)



The National Explosives Task Force (NETF) coordinates rapid integration of explosives expertise with intelligence and Law Enforcement information to support operational activities. Products are peer-reviewed by explosives experts from participating agencies.



- 2/10/2014 – Arecibo, Puerto Rico. Two unexploded ordnance (UXO) items resembling bombs were found at a metal recycling facility.
- 10/21/2013 – El Paso, Texas. Two individuals were severely injured during the unauthorized collection of munitions on Fort Bliss. A subsequent search of salvage yards in the area discovered hundreds of M136 (AT-4), M536, M918 and M385A1 projectiles. (Figure 2)
- 9/15/2013 – Mobile, Alabama. Mobile County Sheriff's Office responded to a recycling facility after receiving a call regarding the recovery of six 155mm Howitzer rounds.
- 4/3/2013 – Salinas, Puerto Rico. National Guard 1600th Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company and the Federal Bureau of Investigation responded to the discovery of hundreds of military munitions at a recycling facility. (Figure 3)
- 11/04/2008 – Arkoma, Oklahoma. A metal plant worker was killed after inadvertently detonating UXO while working with discarded military munitions. (Figure 4)



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Upon encountering suspected military munitions, public safety bomb squads should contact their local EOD Unit or the Pentagon's Army Operations Center (AOC) at 703-697-0214 or 703-695-4695. The AOC is operational 24/7 and will arrange for the dispatch of the nearest available EOD Unit to provide authorized support.

For more information on military munitions safety, see the U.S. Army 3R's Explosive Safety Program at www.denix.osd.mil/uxo/.