

Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum Safety Office cautions against picking wild mushrooms on post

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- When a wild mushroom bears the name "Funeral Bell," it's probably best to avoid them.

The Fort Drum Garrison Safety Office recently worked with the Directorate of Public Works to eliminate a crop of these mushrooms (*Galerina marginata*) from a community playground on post.

Joe Semones, safety director, said they were alerted to the matter when a community member submitted an ICE (Interactive Customer Evaluation) comment. The mushrooms were poisonous and could have posed serious health risks if ingested.

The Safety Office staff routinely checks for wild plants and invasive species when they conduct safety inspections on playgrounds, and Semones said this was a rare occurrence.

"With all the rain we've been having, there are things growing that we normally wouldn't see," he said. "I have inspected that playground off and on now for 12 years, and there's never been mushrooms there before."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, roughly 75 people in North America are poisoned each year by mushrooms, often from eating a poisonous species that resembles an edible one.

Safety Tips for Wild Mushroom:

- Never pick and eat wild mushrooms unless they've been identified by an expert
- Cooking doesn't make a poisonous mushroom safe. In fact, the fumes created while cooking can be toxic
- Even non-poisonous mushrooms can cause unpleasant reactions in people who are sensitive to them

- Symptoms from eating poisonous mushrooms can be delayed for many hours

“The best practice is to leave wild plants and mushrooms alone because even an experienced forager can make mistakes,” Semones said.

The Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch regularly posts photos on social media of plants they’ve encountered during surveys in the training areas. In May, they showed what a real morel mushroom looks like compared to an imposter.

Jason Wagner, Natural Resources Branch manager, said that foraging is a recreational activity that requires a certain amount of knowledge to do so safely.

“You should always be 100 percent certain about the live vegetation you are picking up,” he said. “If you want to get serious about foraging, I recommend full color field guides and spending lots of time in the outdoors using them.”

For more information about recreational activities at Fort Drum, visit <https://fortdrum.isportsman.net> or visit the Natural Resources Outreach Facility, next to the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum on Col. Reade Road. Visitors can receive assistance with recreation passes, get a Fort Drum recreation map and talk to a staff member. The facility is open from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Community members can find the location to the Natural Resources Outreach Facility, and stay current on Fort Drum events by downloading the My Army Post app (MAPA), which is available for free on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

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Photo Caption: The Fort Drum Garrison Safety Office worked with the Directorate of Public Works to remove a crop of Funeral Bell (*Galerina marginata*) mushrooms from a community playground on post. Officials caution community members against picking wild mushrooms. While foraging is a common recreational activity, it requires a certain amount of expertise to know what species of wild plants and mushrooms are safe. (Fort Drum Garrison Safety Office photo)

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