**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What are UXO?**

UXO stands for unexploded ordnance. UXO result from our military's use of munitions during live-fire training or testing. UXO are considered the most dangerous category of military munitions. Although the conditions that define military munitions as UXO are specific, the public should consider any munitions or suspect munitions it encounters as UXO and as extremely dangerous. By visiting this website and learning the 3Rs Recognize, Retreat, Report), you have begun to protect yourself and family from the potential hazards associated with UXO.

After decades of munitions-related activities (e.g., live-fire training and testing, demilitarization) required to maintain our military's readiness, UXO and other military munitions may be present at many active and former military installations across the country. (Other military munitions that could be encountered include those lost during training or disposed of improperly (DMM); munitions involved in accidents; and stolen munitions, such as those taken as souvenirs.) Although military munitions (UXO and DMM) will most likely be found in areas that DoD currently uses (e.g., military installations, particularly operational ranges) or once used (e.g., former installations and ranges), they could be encountered anywhere.

Military munitions, which come in a variety of types and configurations, include, but are not limited to: small arms ammunition, projectiles, cartridges, bombs, rockets, pyrotechnics, grenades, blasting caps, fuzes, pyrotechnics, simulators, and explosives. Military munitions are designed to kill or injure enemy forces or damage enemy equipment, and contain some form of energetic material (propellants, explosives, or pyrotechnic mixes). When military munitions do not function as intended (do what they are supposed to do) during use, they become unexploded ordnance or UXO.

The bullets from used small arms ammunition (e.g., ammunition used in hand guns, rifles, shotguns) do not contain explosives and would not be considered UXO.

Many people also refer to UXO as "duds." Regardless, of what they are called, they should never be touched, disturbed or moved because they can function (explode) and cause serious injury or even death.

**What do military munitions look like?**

New, military munitions are produced in many different sizes, shapes, and colors. Their size and shape depends on how the military intends to use them. For example: small arms munitions, which are used for training soldiers how to shoot their individual weapons, like pistols or rifles, are small. Artillery and tank rounds, which are used to train soldiers in the use of crew-served weapons, like tanks and artillery weapons, are large. Rockets, fired from helicopters, aircraft or ground vehicles, can vary in size, as can bombs dropped from aircraft. Other types of munitions include: hand and rifle grenades, mines and submunitions.

**What do UXO look like?**

Explosives safety experts know that after use and over time, as military munitions are exposed to weather conditions, the paint will wear off or fade. They also know that exposure to the weather will cause UXO and other munitions, like discarded military munitions or DMM, to rust, making them more difficult to spot or recognize.

It is important to know that military munitions (e.g., UXO):

* Come in many shapes and sizes. (Some will look new and others will look old and rusty. Some will look like bullets or bombs. Some will look like pointed metal pipes, soda cans, small balls, or even an old car muffler.)
* May be clearly visible; may be partially or completely hidden.
* May be easy or virtually impossible to recognize as a military munition.

UXO can be found:

* On top of the ground, or partially or completely buried in the ground or by vegetation, sand or snow.
* In or under high grass or bushes.
* Under water, in lakes or streams or, even, the ocean.
* May look like a bullet or bomb, or be in many pieces. (Even small pieces of UXO can be dangerous.)

Additionally, munitions that may have been submerged in fresh water may look like new or be rusted. Munitions that have been submerged in salt water may become nearly or partially encrusted in sea life and be very difficult to recognize.

All munitions discovered outside military control should be considered extremely dangerous!

**Where would I encounter UXO?**

What areas are the most dangerous?

Areas that the military uses or used for live-fire training or testing of weapons or munitions are most likely to contain UXO. Signs, like those below, normally mark such areas on active military installations or bases

Signs

It is, however, important to know that some areas that the military once used to prepare our military for war (i.e., World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Viet Nam) are no longer used by the military. Many of these areas, from which the Department of Defense (DoD) attempted to remove any munitions that resulted from training or testing, are now being used for other purposes, like recreational or industrial parks, or even housing areas. Some of these areas may also be marked with signs warning that UXO may be present or encountered.

Souvenirs

It is also important to remember that sometimes people who have served in the military (maybe a grandparent, parent, or brother or sister) or who have worked on or visited military installations or bases may have taken munitions home as souvenirs. These items, which may be found anywhere, can be extremely dangerous. (See True Stories.)

**If I step on UXO by mistake, or run over it on my bicycle, what will happen?**

If you step on UXO or run it over with your bicycle, it could explode. If you're lucky and it does not, do not touch it! Immediately leave the area in the same direction from which you entered. Report the suspect munition to an adult (a police officer, a teacher, a parent). The best thing to do is to call 911.

If you encounter UXO while playing or on your bike, you are probably in an area where you should not be. However, if you intentionally or even accidentally enter an area where you encounter or think you could encounter a UXO, then you should leave the area immediately. To avoid UXO, retreat by retrace your steps out of the area in the same direction from which you entered the area. Do not go near the UXO, do not touch it, and do not move it. Do not explore the area. Try to remember the area in which you saw the UXO. (If possible, when you are safely away from the UXO, mark the area with a piece of clothing.) To protect yourself, your family, and your friends, immediately report what you saw to a parent, the police, or a teacher.

Remember, you should never go on to operational ranges on active installations because they are extremely dangerous.

**What should we do if we see UXO?**

Remember the 3Rs: Recognize, Retreat, Report.

If you see (recognize) what you think is a military munition, a UXO, or piece of a munition, the most important thing to remember is do not touch it. Immediately retreat from the area in the same direction from which you entered. Report the suspect munition to an adult (a police officer, a teacher, a parent).

The best thing to do is to call 911.

**What will happen if we pick up UXO?**

You can be hurt or even killed. Never, ever pick up an item that looks like it could be a military munition. It could be a UXO. It could cause you or your friends serious injury. What looks harmless may turn out to be deadly. Even explosives experts avoid moving UXO. Whenever possible, they will destroy the UXO by exploding it where it is found. When this is not possible, explosive experts will not pick up a munition, particularly UXO, until they are certain it can be pick it up and move without fear of it exploding!

Some of the most dangerous UXO look harmless. A good rule to follow is, if you did not drop it, do not pick it up.

**My dad has something that looks like a munition at home. Could it be dangerous?**

Everyone's safety, including your dad's, is important. Without seeing it, we cannot determine whether or not it is dangerous. Many people get "war" or "military" souvenirs from their grandparents, parents, or even brothers or sisters who have served in the military both in peacetime and war (WWII, Viet Nam, Iraq, etc.). Although we do not want to take these souvenirs away, we do want to ensure that they are safe for your family to keep. If you are concerned about a souvenir, even one that your family has kept in its home for years, please talk about it with your family, and/or call your local police. The best thing to do is to report it by calling 911.

**If UXO exploded, how far would the pieces go?**

It depends on the design and size of the munition, and how much explosives it contains. When a munition explodes, its metal body breaks into many different sized fragments. The explosion causes these metal fragments to fly at very high speeds in all directions. These fragments are very hot, very sharp, and often jagged. Generally, larger munitions will throw fragments farther. If a small munition exploded in a room the size of a bedroom, it could damage the bedroom and kill or hurt everyone in the room. If a large munition went off in a room the size of a bedroom, it would most likely destroy the bedroom and kill or hurt everyone in the room, and it could very well damage nearby rooms or the entire house, and kill or injure others in the house.

**Would it be safe to just "barely" touch UXO?**

No. It is not safe to "barely" touch UXO. It is not safe to be near UXO. You should consider all UXO as extremely dangerous. When a military munition becomes a UXO, they also become very sensitive. Any movement, or change in temperature change (even from your shadow) could cause a UXO to explode. This is the reason that we tell you to never enter areas known or suspected to contain UXO, and never touch, disturb, move, or pick up a UXO.

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| Recognize, Retreat, Report |  |
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| **RECOGNIZE** — *when you may have encountered a munition.* **RETREAT** — *do not touch, move or disturb it, but carefully leave the area.* **REPORT** — *call 911!* | |