

## Building the Navy's

# Munitions Response Program

## Program Cleans Up Discarded Munitions & Unexploded Ordnance

**T**he Navy has long recognized its responsibility to protect human health and the environment as part of its ongoing cleanup program that addresses military-generated toxic wastes from past disposal sites. Now, the Navy is beginning to address the legacy of live-fire training. In response to Defense Environment Restoration Program (DERP) management guidance released in September 2001, the Navy established a Munitions Response

Program (MRP) modeled after its Installation Restoration (IR) Program. The MRP was implemented using the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) process, which specifies a series of steps for initial assessment through final remediation of cleanup sites.

The MRP is designed to clean up discarded munitions, unexploded ordnance, and their chemical residues at:

- Closed ranges and disposal sites on active installations,
- Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) facilities, and
- Other locations not associated with operational test and training ranges where munitions, unexploded ordnance or related chemical releases may be present.

### Mapping a Plan for the Future

The MRP is considered to be part of the Navy's overall cleanup program. However, funding is uniquely identified, and separate program metrics are under development. Current MRP funding is \$8 million per year to address program

### The Navy's MRP GOALS

1. Reduce hazards to people and the environment.
2. Educate communities on hazards associated with unexploded ordnance (UXO).
3. Maximize public involvement.
4. Facilitate reuse of properties appropriately.

development, a site inventory and initial environmental assessments.

### MRP Site Inventory

In August 2002, the Navy completed a two-year effort to compile an inventory of 212 sites (130 Navy and 82 Marine Corps) known or suspected of containing UXO or chemical residues from munitions. As required by Congress, this initial inventory was made available to the public in May 2003. The Navy is coordinating a review of the inventory with Federal agencies, states, and Native American tribes to ensure all sites were identified. The inventory will be updated annually to include any newly identified sites.



Munitions materials collected for proper disposal.

## Preliminary Assessments

Studies or Preliminary Assessments (PA) are currently underway to provide needed background information on each site identified in the initial inventory. The PAs provide:

- A site history gathered from a physical inspection of the area identified,
- A thorough review of archival data that may indicate the type of training conducted and ordnance used, and
- Interviews with people that currently work or previously were employed on or near the site.

Information gathered during the PA will help confirm the presence of UXO and determine what further actions are required (if any). The Navy expects to complete PAs for all identified sites by 2005.

### MRP Site Prioritization Protocol

Throughout the Department of Defense (DoD), hundreds of MRP sites are being identified. Not all of these sites can be cleaned up at the same time. The Navy is participating in a DoD-wide effort to develop a protocol to determine which sites pose the greatest relative risk and should be cleaned up first. A prioritization value will be assigned to each site based on the level of explosives hazard and chemical exposure risk present. Generally, sites are prioritized on a 'worst first' basis, however, other non-risk factors, such as stakeholder concerns or reuse priorities, may influence when a MRP site is sequenced for funding. The proposed protocol, developed in consultation with states, tribes, and the public, was published in the Federal Register in August 2003 for public comment prior to formal adoption.



Sign near Naval Air Station Adak, AK warns of possible risk from legacy ordnance.

### Outreach and Public Involvement

The success of the MRP program will hinge on its ability to involve stakeholders in the response process. To foster regulatory outreach at a national level, the Navy participates in the DoD Munitions Response Committee (MRC). The committee is comprised of representatives from all the military services and DoD policy makers. Regulatory partners include the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), states, American Indians, Native Alaskans, and other federal land managers such as the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. The MRC strives to reach consensus on munitions response policy and technical issues through the use of a collaborative decision-making process. The Navy's Restoration Advisory Boards (RAB) will provide vehicles for public involvement at local levels throughout the response process. Additionally, a video and safety education products are being developed for January 2004 distribution to Navy activities and RABs.



Aviation ordnancemen at sea aboard USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) secure ordnance to the wing of an F/A-18 Hornet.

The MRP will strengthen the Navy's continuing efforts to protect the health and safety of all people living near munitions response sites, and will actively solicit their input in executing response solutions now and in the future. ⚓

## CONTACT

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