

## Munitions Cleanup: Debunking the Myths

It is a common misconception that munitions are only found on active or former training ranges. In reality the opposite is true. Munitions can and are found throughout a military installation. Often times munitions were discarded along roadways, trails and the immediate vicinity as soldiers traveled to and from training areas. The evolution of a military base means that over the life of the installation uses change, training patterns evolve, and training locations move around. One location can have multiple training uses over time depending on national security needs and subsequent training requirements.

Assertions that an area is not dangerous and never has been can lead to a false sense of security. Investigation and remediation data often tell a different story; as is the case with a much-discussed portion of Parker Flats Munitions Response Area. Twenty-two live munitions items have been found in the immediate area surrounding the oval and 87 munitions debris items have been found *in* and around that oval. Though munitions debris does not present the same risk as live munitions they can be an indicator that live munitions are in the adjacent area. Investigation of this area is appropriate and necessary.

After remedial activities and the subsequent documentation processes have been completed EPA and California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) reviews the work to ensure it meets regulatory requirements. Once that determination is made, EPA issues a certificate of completion signifying that the site remedy has been successfully implemented and the land is safe for public use. It is important to remember that all of Fort Ord was designated a Superfund site in 1990, including the ESCA properties. As such, EPA has regulatory and oversight authority over all of former Fort Ord.

The job of those tasked with munitions investigation and remediation is to study the historic records of the installation, collect data, and determine which areas require investigation. Anything less can result in risk to the public. Obviously, known former training ranges are immediately identified for investigation. Other areas may be less clear-cut. It is those gray areas that pose the most risk to the public. In Southern California a training range was uncovered that was not documented by the military or any other governmental agency. By the time cleanup was completed 113 live munitions items and 22,000 pieces of munitions debris were removed. The risks are real, whether convenient or not, and that is why there is a dedicated process in place at Fort Ord to investigate and remediate munitions.