Questions & Answers

Lead Azide Management and Disposal at Iowa Army Ammunition Plant (IAAAP)

Safety of workers, the community, and the environment is the Army's absolute priority.

This fact sheet answers the most common questions about the planned safe disposal of lead azide at IAAAP. Planning efforts have been coordinated with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fulfill environmental regulations and standards

Key Guidance for Middletown Residents: The controlled detonation will produce temporary loud noise and ground vibrations (two consecutive, rapid detonations). Due to the potential for localized window damage, the U.S. Army recommends that residents in the **Middletown City Park neighborhood** temporarily vacate the area during the detonations out of an abundance of caution. Exact date and time will be announced (planned for November).

Why Is Lead Azide Being Disposed of at IAAAP?

Q: Why is the lead azide present at IAAAP?

A: Lead azide is a primary explosive used to initiate munitions.

Q: Why do you have to destroy it in place? Why can't you transport it?

A: Safety is the absolute priority. Lead azide is a highly sensitive explosive. As it degrades over time it has the potential to become extremely unstable and sensitive to even slight friction or movement. Packing and transporting it poses an unacceptable risk of accidental detonation to personnel handling and transporting as well as to the public. Safely destroying it in place is the only responsible option.

Q: Why wasn't this hazard identified sooner?

A: Safety protocols are working as designed. Continuous inspections of stored materials identified that this specific batch had reached a point where standard handling was no longer safe. The area was isolated and experts were brought in to plan a deliberate, controlled disposal.

Q: Why are we just hearing about this now?

A: The Army prioritized developing a scientifically validated, fully coordinated safety plan before engaging the public. Now that advanced explosive and scientific modeling is complete, we are sharing these detailed plans with the community prior to executing the safe destruction of the material

How Is the Material Being Kept Safe Until Disposal?

Q: How is the material currently stored?

A: The lead azide is securely stored inside certified, earth-covered storage containers designed to contain explosive hazards and isolate materials from causing harm to the surrounding environment.

Q: Who developed the disposal solution?

A: The Army assembled a panel of national experts in munitions chemistry, engineering, and environmental safety. Specialized explosive ordnance disposal personnel will execute the operation in a manner that complies with the EPA regulations. Any necessary deviation from established procedures will be coordinated, authorized, and documented through the appropriate authorities.

(There is more information on the back of this page.)

What Will Residents Experience During the Detonation?

Q: How big will the explosion be? Will it damage homes?

A: Residents in Middletown will hear loud noises and feel vibrations. The blast could potentially break windows. A large “safe zone” area has been identified and extends well beyond the area that the blast can reach. Fire and emergency responders will be staged and on standby to respond to an emergency if needed. As a precaution, we highly recommend that residents in the Middletown City Park neighborhood temporarily vacate the area during the detonations.

Q: What if the blast is larger than expected or a fire starts?

A: This is a highly controlled environment, and we are prepared to respond. A large “safe zone” has been established well beyond the possible blast radius to ensure safety. The installation fire department and emergency responders will be present and prepared.

Q: When will the detonation occur?

A: The Army is planning for detonation sometime in late November. More precise timetables will be shared with the community when available.

Environmental Protections & Sampling

Q: Lead azide has “lead” in the name. Will the blast contaminate air, water, or soil?

A: When lead azide is detonated properly, the intense heat incinerates the explosive material. Active air monitoring stations will operate during the blast to measure any residual effects; sampling will occur afterward to identify material that may need to be cleaned up. Sampling before the detonation provides baseline information about the environment.

Q: Why is environmental sampling needed, and why should I allow sampling on my property?

A: If you are concerned about potential environmental impacts on your property, you are encouraged to sign up for pre-detonation sampling. Participation is voluntary. A Right of Entry agreement is required before we can conduct sampling at your property.

Q: If lead is found in the soil after the blast, who cleans it up?

A: The Army does if it exceeds regulatory thresholds for lead. The detonation plan also includes activities that may be needed for conducting cleanup. After the explosive hazard is neutralized, environmental teams will test the area, remove any contaminated soil, and dispose of it according to EPA regulations.

Impacts to Agricultural Land

Q: How will this affect land I lease from the installation for farming or grazing?

A: The Army is coordinating with current IAAAP agricultural lessees regarding harvest timing. Impacts to agricultural fields will be assessed after the event to determine the best options for future use. Cleanup actions, if required, could result in temporary suspension of certain agricultural leases.

Claims Process

Q: May I file a claim if my property is damaged?

A: Yes, you can file a claim against the U.S. Army for any alleged damage done because of the detonation. Claims would likely be considered under both the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28, U.S.C. 1346(b); 2671-2680 and the Military Claims Act (MCA), 10 U.S.C. § 2733. You have two (2) years from the date of incident to file a claim.

Q: How do I file a claim?

A: Claimants are responsible for correctly completing a Standard Form 95 (SF95) and for furnishing the evidence necessary to substantiate a claim. (See https://www.gsa.gov/system/files/SF95-07a.pdf for SF95 and instructions) Fill out each line completely, (NA where it is not applicable), sign, date and list a sum certain.

Q: Where do I file a claim?
A: To file a claim against the U.S. Army, contact the Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas Claims Office:

Office of the Staff Judge Advocate
415 Custer Avenue
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2313
913-684-3564

Q: What is the extent that I can file a claim for?
A: You may file a claim for any damage you believe was caused by the detonation. Make sure you list a sum certain on the SF 95 and provide all required information See SF 95 Instructions.

Next Steps & More Information
Exact detonation date and time will be announced once finalized (currently planned for late November). Residents in the Middletown City Park neighborhood should plan to temporarily vacate the neighborhood during the event.

For more information call 520-693-1317, email: usarmy.ria.asc.list.pa@army.mil, or visit https://www.army.mil/asc#org-iowa-army-ammunition-plant.