Public and Media Advisory Regarding the Detonation of Lead Azide at Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown, Iowa

On Nov. 20 at approximately noon CST, the U.S. Army will conduct two controlled detonations of degraded lead azide (Pb(N3)2) at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant located at 17571 DMC Highway 79, Middletown, IA 52638. This detonation has been planned and approved in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. In-place planned detonation by Explosive Ordnance Disposal experts is the safest way to eliminate the explosive safety hazard. The degraded lead azide has been deemed unsafe for relocation.

The lead azide barrels will be detonated inside earth-covered magazines made of concrete, and surrounded with Hesco barriers full of sand which are approximately two stories high. Before and during the detonation, the soil above the earth-covered magazines will be thoroughly saturated with water, and water misters will be spraying. These measures should reduce the amount of lead that migrates from the detonation through the air off the installation.

Extensive modeling efforts predict that the potential level of lead particles in the air may be elevated but well below the level at which EPA would require protective actions be taken. The detonation will result in an air plume with some lead-containing particles which will disperse in the air and deposit on the ground.

Due to the potential for localized window damage residents near Middletown City Park and Butterfly Park in Middletown, Iowa, have been identified and asked to vacate their houses from 8 a.m. CST when the EOD team begins setting up the detonations, to 2 p.m. CST.

While safety measures will be fully enforced, the controlled detonation will cause temporary noise, ground vibrations, and a dust plume that will contain some lead. Residents in Middletown will hear a loud noise; feel vibrations from two consecutive, rapid detonations; and see a plume of dust which is expected to linger for no more than one hour after the detonation, depending on wind speed.

If Middletown, Iowa, residents need a place to stay from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. CST, they are invited to come to the Armed Forces Reserve Center at 16815 DMC HWY 34 Middletown, IA 52638. All family members are welcome, including pets. Please ensure pets are appropriately secured in carrying containers or on leashes. Access to the Armed Forces Reserve Center is strictly controlled and use of the Armed Forces Reserve Center for this purpose is limited to identified residents of Middletown, Iowa.

The goal of this advisory is to provide the public with actionable information out of an abundance of caution to minimize lead exposure. There are two primary pathways of concern:

1. Lead exposure by breathing in air after the detonation.
2. Lead exposure from dust on surfaces.

This release contains two maps; one for airborne exposure to lead dust through respiration, and one for exposure from lead dust on surfaces. The maps are subject to change due to the weather.

Updated maps are available at this website: https://www.army.mil/asc#org-iowa-army-ammunition-plant. Members of the public should check for updates:

- 6 hours in advance of the detonation and every hour thereafter until the detonation.
- After the event, the US Army will issue a final estimate of the impacted area.

The EPA plays a pivotal role in lead poisoning prevention through a variety of regulatory measures and enforcement actions aimed at reducing exposure to various environmental media contaminated with lead, including soil. This detonation has been planned and approved in coordination with the EPA under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The Army has taken extraordinary measures to mitigate the plume through earthworks, soil wetting, and water spraying. Pre-controlled detonation sampling has taken place; air monitors have been established for perimeter air monitoring following the event; and environmental sampling of the blast radius will take place. You can learn more about lead in soil here: https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-soil

To minimize potential exposure, members of the public who live or work in the affected areas should consider taking the following actions on the day of the detonation:

- Consider avoiding the affected area.
- If you are inside of the affected areas, avoid outdoor air by staying indoors.
- Keep windows and doors closed.
- If it is safe to do so, set heating and cooling systems to “recirculate” to minimize outdoor air exposure and maximize indoor air filtration until the plume passes by your community.
- Avoid unnecessary travel through impacted areas.
- After the US Army determines the air exposure period has ended, consider cleaning indoor and outdoor surfaces such as play surfaces for children and windowsills.
- If your car was parked outside, consider washing your car at a car wash to minimize your contact with potentially exposed surfaces.
- Learn more about actions you can take to protect you and your family from potential exposures to lead at https://www.epa.gov/lead/actions-reduce-potential-lead-exposure and https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead.

Deposition of lead-containing dust may occur after the detonation on surfaces within certain areas affected by the detonation plume. All humans, but especially children, pregnant individuals, older adults, and other sensitive populations should avoid outdoor activities within affected areas.

All members of the public who reside or work within this affected area should:

- Remain indoors during the potential exposure period if they cannot evacuate beforehand;
- Close all windows, exterior doors, and other openings during the exposure period;
- Turn off or place heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in recirculation mode, minimize outdoor air intake, and maximize indoor air filtration during the potential exposure period; and
- Avoid travelling through the affected area during the potential exposure period.
- Wet-clean surfaces that may be contacted by children, including outdoor play equipment, toys, tables and chairs, handrails, patios, decks, exterior windowsills, and other high-contact surfaces. Such instructions should include specific cleaning and dust mitigation procedures to address deposited and airborne lead particles which minimizes overall human exposure to lead.

Updated plume models will be released the morning of Nov. 20.

**** Media participation may be coordinated by emailing usarmy.pentagon.hqda-acoo.mbx.mrd-press-desk@army.mil before 4 p.m. CST on Nov. 19, 2026. ****

Public inquiries should be sent to usarmy.ria.asc.list.pa@army.mil

PUBLIC ADVISORY

POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO TOXIC LEAD DUST

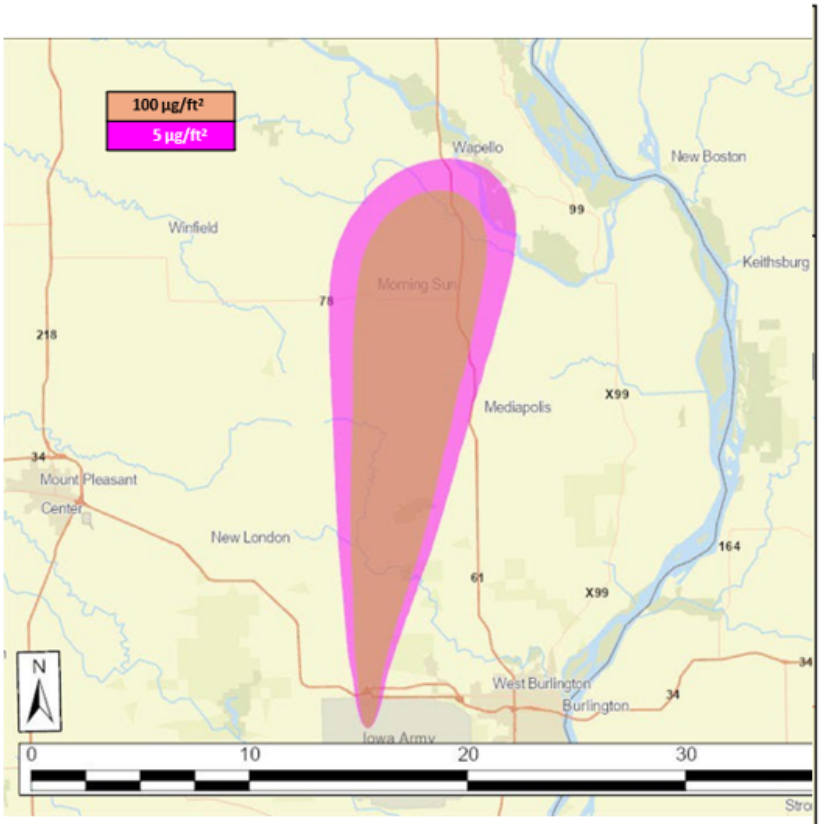
LEAD SURFACE DEPOSITION

Consider avoiding the highlighted area or remain indoors with windows/doors closed

Children under six are especially vulnerable to Lead exposure

AWAIT US ARMY TO ANNOUNCE ALL-CLEAR DETERMINATION

Issued Nov. 17, 2026



PUBLIC ADVISORY

POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO TOXIC LEAD DUST

LEAD AIR DISPERSION

Consider avoiding the highlighted area or remain indoors with windows/doors closed

Children under six are especially vulnerable to Lead exposure

AWAIT US ARMY TO ANNOUNCE ALL-CLEAR DETERMINATION

Issued Nov. 17, 2026

