



Tool Box Talk Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Introduction:

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) is commonly encountered in the UK, often by construction professionals. From 2010 to 2018, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) says it was involved with making safe 450 WWII-era German bombs - around 60 per year¹. The total increases to thousands per year when finds of Land Service Ammunition (mortars, grenade, projectiles etc.) and items found by commercial UXO risk mitigation companies is taken into account. Coastal areas, former airfields, and old munitions factories are examples of potential hotspots for UXO discovery, but unexploded ordnance could be unexpectedly encountered almost anywhere in the UK.

What is UXO?

UXO is broadly defined as any type of explosive weapon (bomb, projectile, grenade, landmine, rocket or other munition) that was deployed or fired but failed to explode. Some UXO can remain dangerous for decades after being deployed, with a risk of detonating/functioning if disturbed, posing serious safety risks.

UXO sources in the UK typically include:

- Munitions resulting from wartime activities including German bombing in WWI and WWII, long range shelling, and defensive activities.
- Munitions deposited as a result of military training and exercises.
- Munitions lost, burnt, buried or otherwise discarded either deliberately, accidentally, or ineffectively, often on land utilised historically by the military.

Actions to take – Prevention & Response**What to do:**

1. Risk Assessment & Planning
 - A UXO Risk Assessment should be commissioned from a UXO Specialist, particularly if your site is in an area with a history of wartime bombing or former military use. This may be a Preliminary, or if required, a Detailed UXO Risk Assessment. If deemed necessary, make use of specialist clearance and on-site support services before or during excavation or other intrusive works.
 - Be particularly aware of the WWII-era history of the site and surrounding area, especially if the site is military in nature.
 - Note that a risk assessment of 'low' or 'minimal' UXO risk does not mean 'no' UXO risk – all ground operatives should be aware of the potential for finding UXO on any site – either through this TBT as a minimum, or a Site Specific UXO Safety and Awareness Briefing from a UXO risk mitigation company.
 - Ensure that a UXO Risk Management Plan is produced for the site. This document is similar to a fire risk assessment, and should detail key contacts, emergency response procedures, means of raising alarm, evacuation muster points, press/media coverage policy etc. Contact 1st Line Defence for a free template and guidance document, which includes printable site information posters and decision flow charts.
2. Recognise Hazard Signs
 - Be aware of any unusual metallic objects: bomb-like shapes, cylindrical or egg-shaped objects, fins/tail units, pipes, objects with rounded nose/pointed tip, or objects of unclear provenance.
 - Some items of UXO may have a painted surface or have painted text/other markings.
 - Note that not all UXO is metallic/ferrous in nature – items may be glass or Bakelite/plastic.
 - Be cautious of unusual ground disturbance – compacted or discoloured soil, buried metallic debris, residues, unusual smells or smoke.
 - Be particularly vigilant when working on any military-related site.

¹ https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43061244?utm_



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3. Immediate Actions on Discovery of Suspect UXO

- Stop work immediately.
- If safe to do so, on encountering, take a photo of the suspected UXO from a safe distance, ideally next to a scale rule/tape or everyday object (e.g. coin, hard hat, pen).
- Evacuate the area (minimum 100m if possible).
- Do not touch, move, or disturb the item.
- Mark and cordon off the area clearly.
- Inform the Site Manager or Supervisor immediately and send them the photo.

Do not:

- Approach or touch the suspected UXO.
- Attempt to move or cover the suspected UXO.
- Return to the area or allow anyone back in it until given the all-clear.

Professional Investigation/Disposal

- A Site Manager/Supervisor should call and where possible send photos to a UXO Risk Mitigation Company, who will assess the picture and help determine if it is UXO related. If a UXO company cannot be contacted, inform the police instead. Tell them who you are, where you are, what has been discovered and where the item is, what actions you have taken and where the incident control point is.
- A commercial UXO company may dispatch their own Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) engineer, or the Site Manager may be advised to contact the local police who may in turn contact a police or MoD EOD team.
- EOD personnel would assess, secure, and if required, conduct a controlled detonation or otherwise make safe/remove the item from site.
- You will be advised when it is safe to return to the site to resume work.

**STAY ALERT. STAY SAFE. TREAT ALL SUSPICIOUS OBJECTS AS LIVE UXO UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN
INVESTIGATED BY A PROFESSIONAL**

Notes:

 1ST LINE DEFENCE	Tool Box Talk Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)	
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Date of Training:	
Training Subject:	TBT Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)
Training Presented by:	

Company	Full Name	Signature