

# Prescribed Burn Frequently Asked Questions: Former Impact Area

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**The map below shows Unit 31 and areas previously burned. The former Impact Area is outlined in blue.**

## Background

**The Army has identified Unit 31 in the Impact Area for prescribed burning in 2018.** Unit A in the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument is also scheduled for prescribed burning in 2018.

Prescribed burns are an important part of the munitions cleanup and are also required under an agreement between the Army and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part of the Installation-Wide Multispecies Habitat Management Plan.

The prescribed burn will make the ground surface accessible for safe munitions removal to follow.

Vegetation on Fort Ord is primarily Central Maritime Chaparral which includes several rare, threatened and

endangered plant species. This habitat depends on periodic fire to sustain its diversity. In addition, prescribed burns reduce overgrown vegetation, which, in turn, reduces the risk of wildfire. The map on this page shows the location of Unit 31 as well as the units burned since 2003. The Army intends to conduct prescribed burns as soon as weather permits, after July 1. A prescribed burn may commence when conditions provide for safe operations and good smoke behavior in order to minimize impacts to local communities. Suitable weather conditions include clear skies, moderate to warm temperatures and light winds.

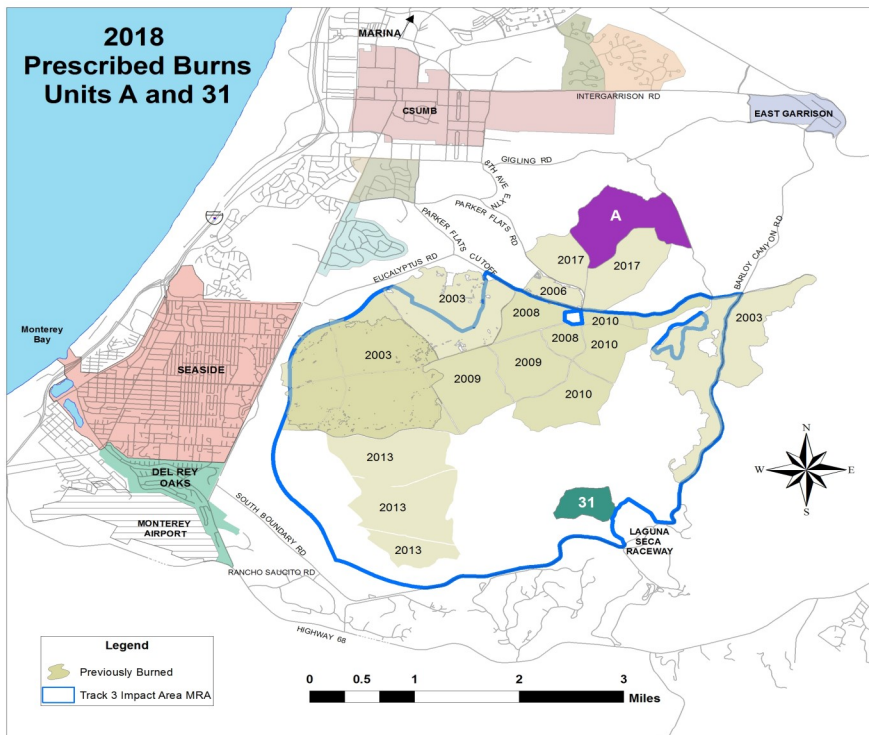
Since the date for the burn will depend on specific weather conditions and other factors, an exact date cannot be predicted. Notice of impending burn operations will be provided through the Army's **Direct Notification Program**.

Through the Direct Notification Program, the Army will announce

- when resources have been mobilized for burn operations,
- when the prescribed burn is ignited, and
- when the burn operations are complete for the day.

Direct notifications will be provided by email, text, or auto-dialer telephone calls for anyone who registers.

*(continued on page 2)*



Details for the 2018 Impact Area prescribed burn operations are provided in the Munitions Response Site BLM Units 25 and 31 Prescribed Burn Plan (2016), is available at [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com).

The Army is anticipating completing the remaining prescribed burns and

associated munitions cleanup within the next 5 to 8 years. Following cleanup, the Impact Area munitions response area will be transferred to the Bureau of Land Management as part of the Fort Ord National Monument.

**Direct Notification  
Registration**

[www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com)  
or  
Call 831-242-7383 or  
800-852-9699

## Why Does the Army Burn? / How Does A Burn Work?

### **WHY DOES THE ARMY CONDUCT PRESCRIBED BURNS?**

A prescribed burn removes dense vegetation which allows cleanup workers to safely enter and clear munitions and explosives of concern.

Burning Central Maritime Chaparral vegetation encourages recovery of rare, threatened and endangered fire dependent species.

### **ISN'T THERE ANY WAY TO REMOVE THE VEGETATION WITHOUT A PRESCRIBED BURN?**

Because munitions and explosives of concern are on the surface, the safest method is a prescribed burn. A burn is also the most beneficial to the environment in the former Impact Area where the dominant vegetation is Central Maritime Chaparral. Where a burn is not feasible or where chaparral is not the dominant vegetation type, the vegetation will then be cut to conduct munitions cleanup.

### **WHEN WILL THE BURN OCCUR?**

A burn can occur between July 1 and December 31. A burn will be conducted when weather conditions meet the burn prescription. For updates, go to [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com) or call 800-852-9699 or 831-242-7383.

### **WILL THE BURN OCCUR ON A WEEKEND?**

The burn could occur any day of the week depending on weather conditions. The most important consideration is to conduct the burn on a day when there will be the best opportunity for safe operations, and good smoke and fire behavior to reduce the risk of an escape and minimize smoke impacts.

### **HOW WILL PEOPLE BE NOTIFIED WHEN THE PRESCRIBED BURN WILL OCCUR?**

People who register for the Direct Notification Program will receive advance notification. When a decision is made to mobilize, the Army will contact them directly by phone, text, and/or email. The Army will also issue press releases and public service announcements to the media. Updates will be posted at [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com) and on the hotline 800-852-9699 or 831-242-7383.

The final decision to go ahead with a burn, or postpone it, is made in the morning of the intended burn day, after weather conditions are known. If the decision is made to conduct a prescribed burn, the Army will notify each person registered in the Direct Notification Program.

### **HOW IS SIZE OF THE UNIT DETERMINED?**

The size of the burn is determined by many factors including amount of vegetation present, aspect, slope, terrain, proximity to areas previously burned or cleared, anticipated types of munitions in the burn unit, and existing fuel break roads. All of these site-specific characteristics are reviewed by fire professionals planning the burn to ensure the burn can be conducted in a safe manner. Because of these variables, the size of the burn is not limited to a specific number of acres.

### **HOW WILL THE BURN BE MANAGED?**

To make the prescribed burn more manageable, the area that will be burned is surrounded by existing fuel break roads. A network of multiple containment lines (expanded fuel breaks or existing roads) is established around each unit.

The burn will be conducted using helicopters and wildland fire equipment. They can be quickly dispatched to address any spot fires.

### Commuters in Cars and on Bicycles: There Will Be Burn-Related Road Closures.

#### AUTO TRAVEL/COMMUTE:

During burn operations, please note that South Boundary and Rancho Saucito roads will be closed to commuter and recreational traffic. **You will not be able to access Ryan Ranch via Fort Ord.**

**Thank you for your patience.**

#### RECREATIONAL USERS:

South Boundary, Rancho Saucito, Barloy Canyon, and Eucalyptus roads will be closed for safety purposes. Some trails may be closed during burn operations.



#### REGISTER FOR DIRECT NOTIFICATION PROGRAM:

People who register for the Direct Notification Program will receive advance notification. The Army will contact them directly by phone, text, and/or email when a decision is made to mobilize, when the burn begins, and when burn operations are complete. Register at [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com) or call 800-852-9699.

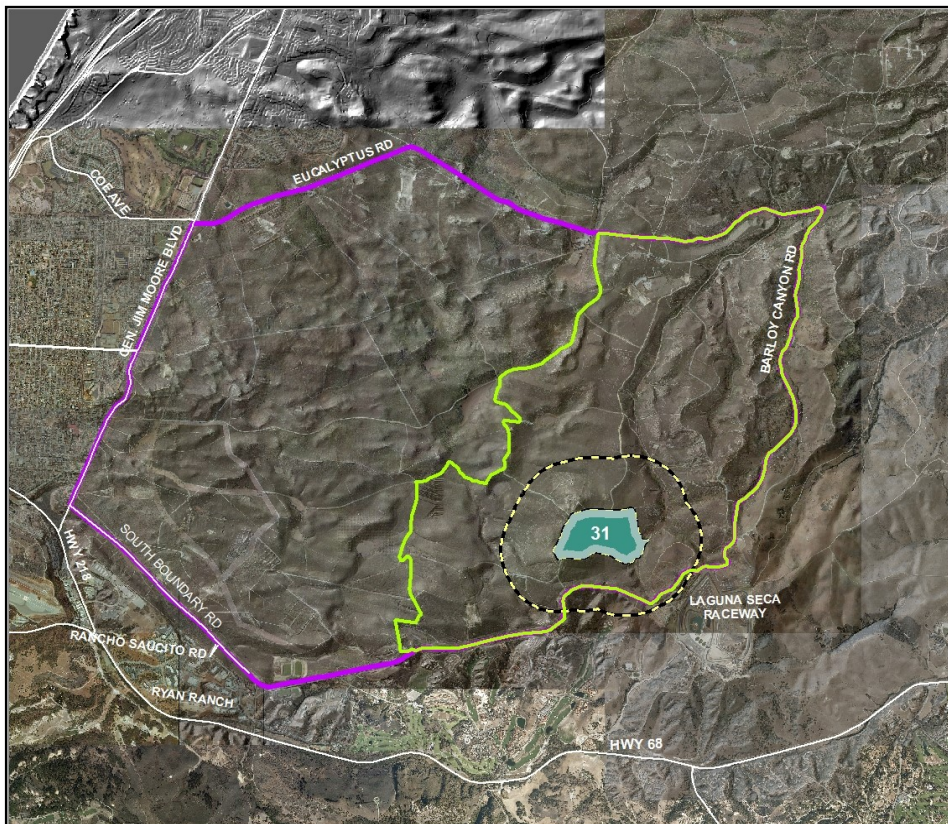
#### COULD HOMES BE HIT BY FLYING FRAGMENTS IF MUNITIONS ARE DETONATED DURING THE BURN?

Department of Defense procedures require identification of the maximum distance that munitions fragments could travel, if detonated. Based on the type of munitions

previously found in the area of Unit 31, the 75mm high explosive (HE) MKI Projectile is the munition with the greatest fragmentation distance. For the purpose of prescribed burning, a nonessential personnel exclusion zone has been established at a distance of 1,873 feet from the interior edge of the

unit. See dotted line on map below.

Munitions may detonate during a prescribed burn. Only essential personnel are allowed inside the exclusion zone during the burn. The Army does not expect any effects to people or structures from flying fragments.



**Unit 31 Containment Lines and Exclusion Zone**



**Legend**

- Primary Containment Line
- Secondary Containment Line
- Tertiary Containment Line
- 1,873 ft Exclusion Zone



**This map shows Unit 31's containment lines and exclusion zone (dotted line).**

## Details About the Smoke

### **WILL THE SMOKE CONTAIN DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES?**

The Army, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control have studied this issue carefully. The agencies have concluded that substances in smoke from these Fort Ord prescribed burns are not significantly different than smoke from a prescribed burn anywhere else with similar vegetation. Technical documents that summarize these studies are available at [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com).

### **WERE THESE STUDIES BASED ON ACTUAL MEASUREMENTS?**

Yes. Members of the community expressed concern that smoke from a burn at former Fort Ord would contain toxic substances that would pose a health risk to the community. The Army collected air sampling data related to the smoke from the 2003 prescribed burn. This data was analyzed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (also called ATSDR). The results in the ATSDR analysis report indicated that smoke from a Fort Ord burn is no different from other prescribed burn in similar vegetation. ATSDR recommended that those individuals with respiratory illnesses or who are especially sensitive to smoke should stay indoors or temporarily leave the area during burn events.

Air monitoring conducted during the 2003 prescribed burn at the Ranges 43-48 site tested for many chemicals that could be present in the smoke from the prescribed burn. Munitions-related chemicals were not detected in any of air samples. Results of the 2003 air monitoring program showed smoke from prescribed

burns at former Fort Ord is no different from any other vegetation burn of similar vegetation types. The 2003 air monitoring report, "Draft Final Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn Air Monitoring Report, Former Fort Ord, California" (OE-0481J) can be downloaded from [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com).

### **WILL THE BURN RELEASE RADIOACTIVE SMOKE OR MATERIAL INTO THE AIR?**

No. Munitions containing radioactive materials were not fired on former Fort Ord ranges.

### **WILL THE PUBLIC BE EXPOSED TO DANGEROUS LEVELS OF POISON OAK IN THE AIR?**

No. Poison oak occurs primarily within coast live oak woodlands and is much less persistent in the extensive Central Maritime Chaparral habitat areas--the primary target of prescribed burns. Burns have occurred at former Fort Ord for many decades and firefighters working within burn areas have not reported problems from poison oak in smoke.

### **HOW LONG WILL SMOKE BE IN THE AIR?**

Each burn is planned to last one day, at most, two days. Smoke could be in the air one or two days longer. Typically there are three phases of smoke from each burn.

- The first phase, referred to as ignition phase, lasts about 2 hours following first ignition.
- The second phase is the consumption phase; ignition is complete and vegetation is actively burning and lasts about 2 hours after the ignition phase ends.

- The third phase, the smolder phase, may last up to 36 hours as the burned area cools.

Smoke is generally diluted and swept away by onshore winds in the first 24 hours after ignition.

The Army works with the Monterey Bay Air Resources District, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to conduct the prescribed burns in a manner that minimizes smoke impacts to surrounding communities. The Monterey Bay Air Resources District provides air quality information at their web site: [www.montereybaycleanair.org](http://www.montereybaycleanair.org).

### **IS MY HEALTH AT RISK FROM BREATHING SMOKE?**

If you are healthy, you're usually not at a major risk from smoke. Still, it's a good idea to avoid breathing smoke if you can help it.

Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gasses and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn. The biggest health threat from smoke comes from fine particles. These microscopic particles can get into your eyes and respiratory system where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis. Fine particles can also aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases and are even linked to premature deaths in people with these conditions. People with existing health conditions, such as asthma or emphysema or existing heart conditions, may want to take reasonable precautions such as staying indoors or going out of the area during the burn. You can download additional information of the U.S. Environmental Protection



**Ideal burn conditions move smoke up and away from nearby communities. In these ideal conditions, smoke can be dispersed by winds in the upper atmosphere—away from the airshed of the community—to minimize smoke impacts to the community. The prescribed burn area is contained within vegetation breaks called containment lines or fuel breaks.**

Agency website about how smoke from fires can affect your health at the following link <https://cfpub.epa.gov/airnow/index.cfm?action=smoke.page1>.

If you need a copy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fact sheet “How Smoke from Fires Can Affect Your Health” or have other questions about the Fort Ord prescribed burns, please call the Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup Hotline at 800-852-9699, or call 831-242-7383, or go to [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com). Additional information is also available at Monterey Bay Air Resources District at [www.montereybatcleanair.org](http://www.montereybatcleanair.org).

#### **WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE SMOKE EXPOSURE?**

To reduce exposure to smoke, please consider the following precautions:

- Listen to public service advisories and be alert for further information.
- Close up your home by shutting windows and doors.

- Avoid strenuous work or exercise outdoors.
- If you have heart, vascular or lung disease, including asthma, talk with your health care provider before burn season to make plans.

#### **WHY WAS THERE SO MUCH SMOKE FROM PAST BURNS?**

The burns in 2003 produced a considerable amount of smoke near Highway 68 to the east and southeast of former Fort Ord. Carmel, Pebble Beach, Pacific Grove, and Monterey also experienced smoke in 2003.

The 2003 burn was planned to be 500 acres, but it actually burned 1,500 acres and weather conditions held smoke close to the ground rather than allowing it to be dissipated at high altitudes. Burns completed after 2003 were not as large as 2003 burns and were conducted under atmospheric conditions that produced better smoke behavior. The Army takes extensive precautions to ensure that the burns will be conducted under

appropriate weather conditions.

#### **WHICH AREAS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY SMOKE?**

If everything goes as planned, no areas should be seriously affected. But some smoke will be present for a short time in communities surrounding former Fort Ord.

**Register Now for  
Direct Notification of  
2018 Prescribed Burns**

[www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com)

OR

Call 831-242-7383 or  
800-852-9699

## History of Fort Ord Prescribed Burns

Date	Type of Fire Event	Name/Area	Acres Burned	Additional Acreage Burned in Spot Fires	Escape
Oct 2017	Prescribed Burn	BLM Area B, Unit B	250	None	No
		BLM Area B, Unit C	119	57 acres in MRS-16	No
Oct 2013	Prescribed Burn	Unit 10	279	None	No
		Unit 7	310	104 acres in Units 33, 4, 6	Yes
Oct 2010	Prescribed Burn	Unit 21	117	None	No
		Unit 15	195	None	No
Aug-Sept 2010	Blacklining	Unit 34	30	None	No
		Unit 32 (partial)	3	None	No
Oct 2009	Prescribed Burn	Unit 14	277	78 acres in Watkins Gate Burn Area	No
Nov 2009	Prescribed Burn	Unit 19	184	None	No
Dec 2008	Prescribed Burn	Unit 18	137	None	No
		Unit 22	23	None	No
Nov 2007	Blacklining	Unit 2 Primary Containment Line	4	None	No
Oct 2006	Prescribed Burn	MRS-16	79	0.23 acres in Unit 18	No
Oct 2003	Prescribed Burn	Ranges 43-48	490	920 acres in Watkins Gate Burn Area	Yes
Sep 1998	Prescribed Burn	OE-10A	136	None	No
		OE44	60	None	No
1997	Prescribed Burn	OE-10B (partial)	100	700 acres in OE-27L	Yes
Aug 1995	Prescribed Burn	OE-19	24	MRS-48	No
		OE-10A (partial)	113	None	No
Jul 1994	Prescribed Burn	OE-5	28	None	No
Aug 1994	Prescribed Burn	OE-47	60	None	No

## Other Fort Ord Burn Events Not Related to Munitions Response Actions\*

Date	Type of Fire Event	Name/Area	Acres Burned
Oct 2017	Wildfire	Rancho Saucito Road & South Boundary Road	31
July 2017	Wildfire	Reservation Road & Blanco Road	100
Aug 2015	Wildfire	Fort Ord National Monument & Highway 68	23
Aug 2009	Wildfire	Oscar Fire/Range 47	7
Aug 2007	Wildfire	Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) Electrical Fire	17
2005	Training/Habitat Burn	Fort Ord Reuse Authority/Parker Flats	109
Jul 2003	Wildfire	East Garrison	3
		Eucalyptus Fire	645
Nov 1995	Fire Department Training Burn	2-Story Barracks	About 2-3 Buildings
Sep 1994	Wildfire	Grassland behind Toro Park	10

\* This information was acquired from newspaper archives and on site records. It is not a complete list of all fire incidents as it does not include the accidental and range clearing fires when the base was active military.

## Prescribed Burns: Other Questions

### **WILL A PRESCRIBED BURN DAMAGE THE VEGETATION?**

No. In fact, in the Central Maritime Chaparral plant community if brush is cleared by burning the habitat not only recovers, but flourishes. If brush is cleared by cutting, the habitat does not grow back as healthy or diverse as before.

### **WILL A PRESCRIBED BURN AFFECT ANIMAL LIFE?**

Wildlife has a remarkable ability to avoid fire. Burrowing animals stay safely underground. Birds fly away. The animals will simply leave the area of the burn and will return as vegetation begins to grow back since young plant growth is very nutritious for wildlife.

### **HOW WILL THIS LAND BE USED AFTER IT IS CLEANED UP?**

Prescribed burns are being conducted in areas that will be transferred to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management as part of the Fort Ord National Monument for habitat reserve and recreation.

### **WHY IS THE ARMY NOT OFFERING REIMBURSEMENT FOR VOLUNTARY RELOCATION?**

The Army plans to minimize smoke impacts on the community during prescribed burns by designing burn units conducive to a safe burn and conducting burns under specific weather conditions.

The voluntary relocation program was discontinued after 2006. Since then, the Direct Notification Program has been successfully implemented to provide timely information to the public regarding the status of each planned burn at the former Fort Ord. The Army acknowledges that some prescribed burns can affect air quality and can affect sensitive individuals. Therefore, the Army has taken numerous steps to design prescribed burns that will minimize smoke impacts in the surrounding community such as conducting a prescribed burn when an appropriate combination of atmospheric conditions and moisture levels in the vegetation occurs. In addition, analysis of the smoke from Fort Ord prescribed burns indicates the smoke is the same as any other vegetation burn. Community notification and smoke management can minimize potential impacts from smoke. Through community notification, the public is advised of reasonable precautions they can take to minimize exposure to smoke from prescribed burns, such as staying



**Fire poppies are one type of plant that germinates following a burn.**

indoors with doors and windows closed and limiting outdoor activity when smoke is present. The Army offers a Direct Notification Program under which registered individuals are notified in advance when a prescribed burn is considered imminent and when a prescribed burn is started so that they may make the appropriate choices for themselves and their families.

Para información en español, llame al 831-393-1284.