

# Prescribed Burn Frequently Asked Questions: Army Munitions Cleanup—Northern Portion of the National Monument

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## Background

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

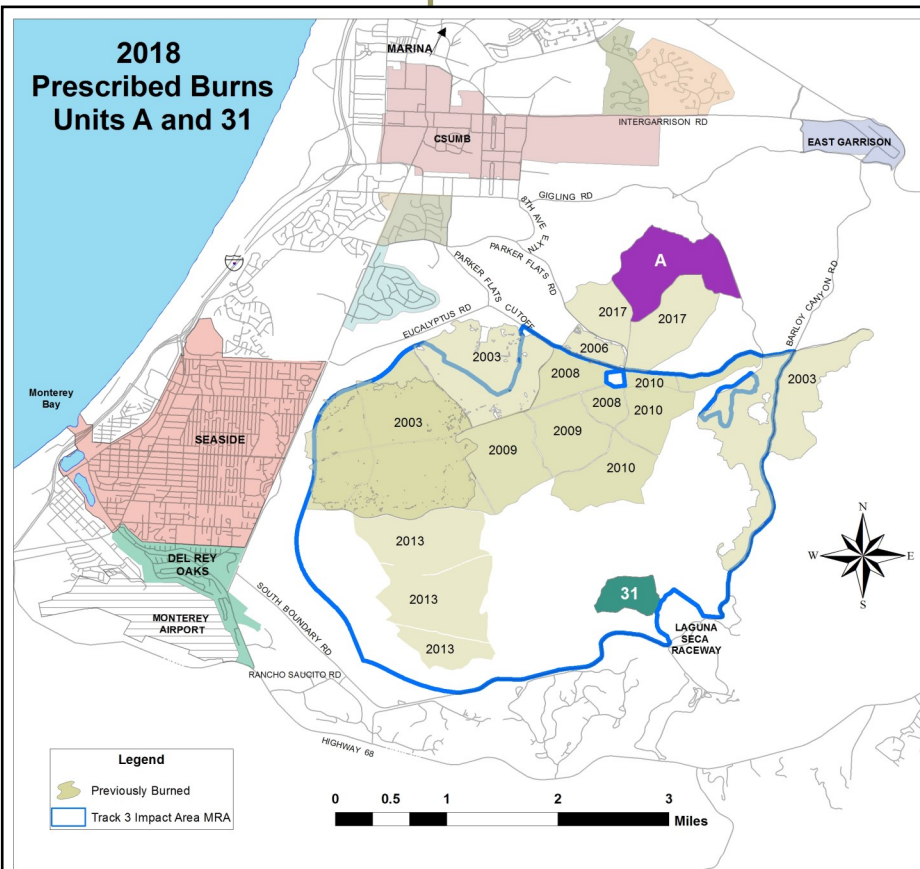
The prescribed burn will make the ground surface accessible for safe munitions removal to follow. Vegetation on Fort Ord is primarily Central Maritime Chaparral which includes several rare, threatened and endangered plant species. This habitat depends on periodic fire to sustain its diversity. In addition, prescribed burns reduce overgrown vegetation, which in turn, reduces the risk of wildfire.

The map on this page shows the location of Units A and 31 as well as areas 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**.

When resources are available, the Army's Direct Notification Program will announce:

- when mobilization occurs 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.

Prescribed burn operation details are in the BLM Area B Units A, B, and C Prescribed Burn Plan (2017),

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

The Army is prioritizing the prescribed burns and associated munitions cleanup within the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument over the next several years. The Army and the

Bureau of Land Management are committed to providing clean and safe parkland for visitors, workers, and wildlife on the former Fort Ord.

## 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 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 prescribed burning. Burning is also most beneficial to the environment in the habitat reserve where the dominant vegetation is Central Maritime Chaparral. Where burning is not feasible or where chaparral is not the dominant vegetation type, the vegetation will be cut to conduct munitions cleanup.

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

Once the area is prepared, a prescribed 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 a burn 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 THE SIZE OF THE BURN DETERMINED?**

The size of the burn is determined by many factors including fuel (vegetation) loading, aspect, slope, terrain, proximity to areas previously burned or cleared, anticipated types of munitions found 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 that the prescribed 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), are 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.

## Plan Ahead, Know Before You Go

### AUTO TRAVEL/COMMUTE:

Intergarrison Road is subject to closure in case of emergency.

### RECREATIONAL USERS:

Eucalyptus, Barloy Canyon, Intergarrison, 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Extension, Parker Flats and Parker Flats Cutoff roads will be closed. All areas within this perimeter will remain closed during burn activities, including Gigling Road. Pedestrian, recreation, and non-project vehicle use of these roads will be unavailable until completion of burn operations.

**TRAIL ACCESS MAPS FOR THE NORTHERN PORTION OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT:** You can view a map of trail access in this area at <http://fortordcleanup.com/programs/blm-area-b/>



### REGISTER FOR DIRECT NOTIFICATION PROGRAM:

Those registered for the Direct Notification Program will receive advance notice of a burn. 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 or 242-7383.

## Mind the Signs

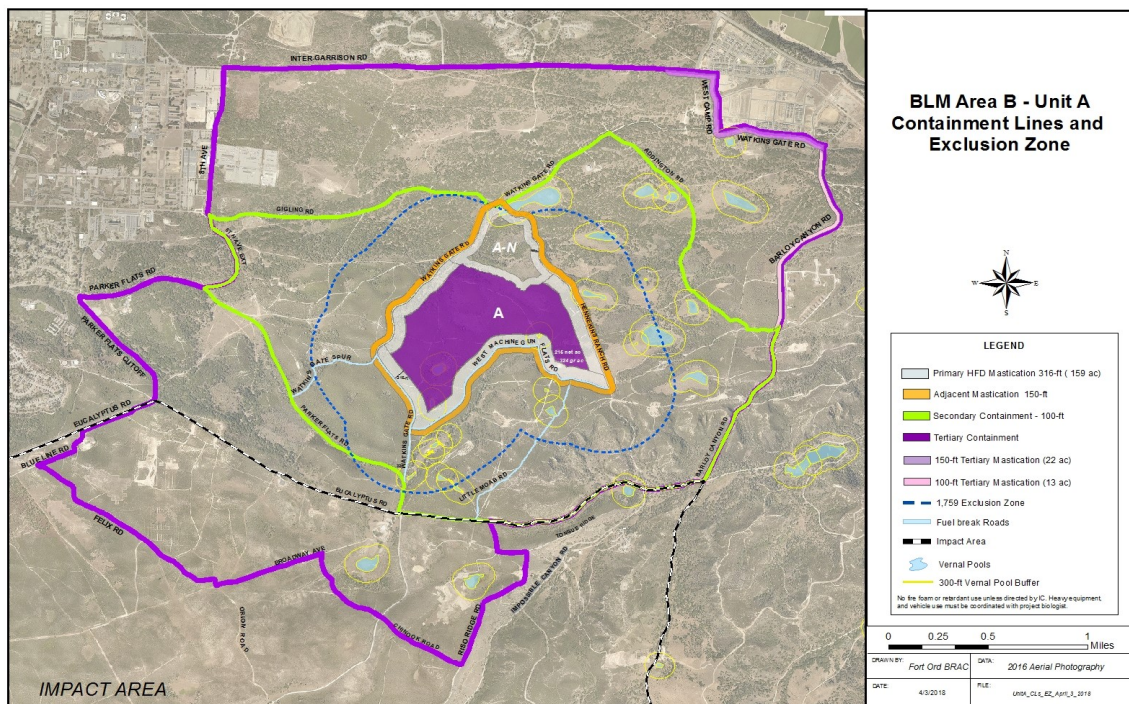
### COULD ANYONE BE HIT BY FLYING FRAGMENTS IF MUNITIONS ARE DETONATED DURING THE BURN?

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

viously found in this area, the 4.5 inch Barrage Rocket is the munition with the greatest fragmentation distance. For the purpose of prescribed burning, a nonessential personnel exclusion zone based on the maximum fragmentation distance has been established at a distance of 1,759 feet from the interior edge of

the unit. See blue 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 effect to people or structures from flying fragments, but remember to **Mind the Signs**.



This map shows Unit A and the 1,759-foot exclusion zone.

## 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 smoke from the 2003 prescribed burn. This data was analyzed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (also called ATSDR). Results in the ATSDR analysis report indicated smoke from Fort Ord burns is no different from other prescribed burns 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 Ranges 43-48 site tested for many chemicals that could be present in smoke from a prescribed burn. Munitions-related chemicals were not detected in any air samples. The 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. No munitions containing radioactive materials were 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 the 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 the ignition phase, lasts about 2 hours following first ignition.
- The second phase is the consumption phase, ignition is complete and the vegetation is actively burning and lasts about an hour after the ignition phase ends.

- The third phase, the smolder phase, occurs overnight and extends into the next day as the burned area cools. The 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 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 more information from 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.montereybaycleanair.org](http://www.montereybaycleanair.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.

## Prescribed Burns: Other Questions

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

No. In fact, if Central Maritime Chaparral is cleared by burning the habitat not only recovers but flourishes. If brush is cleared by cutting, 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. 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?**

Following the cleanup, these areas will be returned for recreational use and habitat management as a part of the National Monument.

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

The Army plans to minimize smoke impact on the community during a prescribed burn by designing burn units conducive to a safe burn and conducting a burn 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 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 prescribed burns when an appropriate combination of atmospheric conditions and moisture levels in the vegetation occurs.

In addition, analysis of smoke from Fort Ord prescribed burns indicate 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 smoke exposure from prescribed burns, such as staying

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 can make appropriate choices for themselves and their families.



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

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