



Department of **Consumer
and Employment Protection**

Resources Safety Division



Disposal of unwanted and abandoned explosives – Dangerous goods safety guidance note X04/08

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Introduction

Unwanted and abandoned explosives pose a safety and security risk to members of the public unless appropriately and securely stored in an explosives storage magazine. They need to be disposed of in a timely and safe manner. A person with little or no knowledge of explosives **must not** handle explosives, as serious injury or death could result.

This guidance note assists people in Western Australia who find themselves in possession of *unwanted explosives* without legal authority, as they are responsible for arranging their safe disposal.

It also covers the discovery of *abandoned explosives* on public land.

It does not apply to commercial operators such as licensed shotfirers, mine operators and shipping or boating companies — explosives that are surplus to requirements must be disposed of responsibly by the owner at his or her cost.

The information provided principally applies to commercial blasting explosives but also covers most other explosives, such as fireworks, railway track signals and marine distress flares.

This guidance note does not apply to bombs or improvised explosive devices (the responsibility of the Western Australia Police Bomb Disposal Squad), any military explosives (the responsibility of the Australian Defence Force) or ammunition. Ammunition may be handed in at the local police station and the WA Police will arrange for safe disposal.

What is the difference between 'unwanted' and 'abandoned'?

Unwanted explosives are those that are not wanted because they are out of date, damaged or left over as surplus from previous projects or owners, and for which the owner of the premises on which they are present has no legal authority to possess the explosives. The term does not apply to explosives that are owned by licensed shotfirers, commercial companies and mine site operators.

Abandoned explosives are those discovered on public land, such as the roadside, in the bush or on a rubbish tip.

Unwanted explosives

Untrained individuals **must not** handle explosives, as serious injury or death could result. Instead, a local licensed shotfirer or fireworks operator or contractor, as appropriate, should be contacted for advice and assistance. Alternatively, a local quarry or mine site may be contacted to ascertain if they can provide assistance with the explosives disposal. Explosives manufacturers are also committed to assist people as part of their cradle-to-grave product stewardship policies.

If it can be done safely (i.e. without touching), prepare a detailed description of the explosives *before* contacting a qualified person to assist in their disposal, and include the following information, which may be visible on wrapping or packaging:

- type;
- manufacturer;
- age;
- condition; and
- quantity.

Commercial shotfiring contractors are listed in the phone book (search under *shotfirers* or *blasting contractors and equipment*). Some commercial pyrotechnic or fireworks contractors are suitably qualified to dispose of marine distress flares.

Resources Safety does not offer a collection or on-site disposal service for unwanted explosives.

Note: Anyone who transports explosives must comply with the Australian Explosives Code.

Disposal of explosives, not including marine distress flares

Since the disposal of explosives is a potentially lethal operation, it **must only** be performed by a licensed individual as listed below:

- blasting explosives — holder of a shotfirer licence;
- outdoor fireworks — holder of a fireworks operator or fireworks contractor licence; and
- other pyrotechnics — holder of a pyrotechnics (special use) licence.

Disposal of marine distress flares

Flares can be dangerous and must be disposed of appropriately by qualified people.

Unwanted marine distress flares should not be disposed of by discarding them in an unsafe manner. For example, do not dispose of them in a rubbish bin, at a rubbish tip, at sea or in the bush. It is also illegal to discharge a flare when not involved in an emergency, unless authorised by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) – Marine Safety Business Unit (Marine Safety).

The flares should be handed to a nominated collection point or arrangements made for their disposal by a commercial operator.

Collection points for unwanted marine distress flares

Department for Planning and Infrastructure – Marine Safety

Phone 08 9216 8999
 Email marinesafety@dpi.wa.gov.au
 Web www.dpi.wa.gov.au/marine

Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA)

Phone 08 9323 9300
 Email fesa@fesa.wa.gov.au
 Web www.fesa.wa.gov.au

Abandoned explosives

Members of the public who discover abandoned explosives in public places such as roadsides, rubbish tips or in the bush outside of private properties should immediately vacate the area and notify the WA Police (phone 131 444).

The explosives should **not** be examined or moved by members of the public. The WA Police will assess the situation and arrange for disposal. If necessary, advice will be sought from Resources Safety.

Further information

Contact Resources Safety – Dangerous Goods Safety Branch:

Phone 08 9358 8002

Email dgsb@docep.wa.gov.au

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