



PRESS RELEASE

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Demilitarization at LEMC - an essential part of munitions process

Ammunition, which comprises explosives and propellants, has the potential to deteriorate and become unstable with age, posing increased safety concern for both handlers and military personnel.

Demilitarization helps to mitigate these risks by safely disposing of energetics contained within the munitions. Demilitarization and disposal are the final steps in the life-cycle management of ammunition.

Those who live near the Letterkenny Munitions Center in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania have reported hearing loud whooshing and the other peculiar sounds that occur when the demilitarization process is underway.

The Department of Defense sustains combat readiness through safe and efficient disposal of obsolete, defective, and excess munitions at a rate sufficient to keep pace with new generations of munitions and control overall stockpile growth.

LEMC, a subordinate of the Joint Munitions Command, is permitted to conduct munitions disposal operations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the operations are constantly monitored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to ensure public and environmental safety. The regulations include a variety of site-specific inspection techniques.

“Items that require demilitarization can range from a rifle cartridge to a 2,000-pound bunker buster bomb,” said Lt. Col. Kimberly Deaton, LEMC’s commander. “Numerous weather conditions are considered before conducting any demil operations. We closely monitor inversions, cloud cover, wind direction and wind speed to keep noise to a minimum and lessen local disruptions.”

Demilitarization operations primarily take place during the middle of the day. However, LEMC has authorization to engage in demil activities from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

“Demilitarization of outdated munitions is crucial for safety, environmental protection, risk reduction, regulatory compliance, and it plays an important role in Army readiness and our nation’s defense,” Deaton said.

LEMC also operates the DOD’s only closed-disposal system for rocket motors. The facility is fully permitted and operates within the same timeframes as other operations. However, not all rocket motors are able to be treated and are instead disposed of through static firing. Such action can create a rumbling or swooshing sound that may be heard from a distance.

For individuals wishing to verify the origination of sounds that come from LEMC, a noise hotline is in place and the phone number is 717-267-8860.

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Crew members of Letterkenny Munitions Center prepare a rocket motor for open burning destruction. The rocket motor is chained down to ensure the safety of the employees and surrounding facilities. Depending on size, up to 20 can be treated at one time lasting several minutes.