



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

VIRGINIA PRESSLER, MD
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2016

16-081

HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HOLDS BIG ISLAND FORUM TO DISCUSS MILITARY MUNITIONS AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO) SAFETY

**Waikoloa Marriott Hotel
Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2016 (9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.)**

HONOLULU -- Hawaii has the distinction of being home to the single largest site in the nation contaminated with military munitions and unexploded ordnance, the 'Waikoloa Maneuver Area' on the Big Island. While cleanup is currently underway, completing it is an enormous, expensive, and long-term job. The total cost to clean up the formerly used 'live-fire' training area is estimated to be approximately \$750 million and expected to take decades. On Wednesday, Nov. 30, the Department of Health will sponsor the first Hawaii Forum on Munitions and Unexploded Ordnance at the Waikoloa Beach Marriott.

The forum will bring together experts to speak on the issues involving Hawaii properties affected by military munitions and what this means for landowners in those areas. The department will also present the state's proposed Munitions Safety Areawide Hazard Management Plan for the Waikoloa area of Hawaii County. The plan describes the history of military 'live fire' training in Waikoloa and precautions people should take to protect themselves from accidentally detonating an item of unexploded ordnance or UXO.

The site in question occupies over 100,000 acres in the Waikoloa area of the Big Island. The site was acquired from Parker Ranch in 1943 during World War II. From 1943-1946 the 'Waikoloa Maneuver Area' was used extensively to simulate realistic battle conditions using live artillery, ammunition, and explosives. The area was large enough to train an entire division of troops at once on the same day. This site is one of several "live-fire" training areas throughout the State.

Cleanup is being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Department of the Army (DOA) in coordination with the Hawaii Department of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The cleanup work follows a very thorough process prescribed by the federal Superfund law.

This large land area is now in the hands of many private owners. Each of the owners must first grant the USACE an official Right of Entry (ROE). Although the USACE is willing to survey and dispose of the potential unexploded ordnance at no cost, owners are often reluctant to grant access to their properties. The USACE has recently initiated cleanup in an area comprised of over 800 privately owned parcels of land and the Department of Health is urging landowners to grant access to their property for their own safety and protection. Private landowners who decline the USACE's offer could be required to conduct discovery and disposal of unexploded ordnance at their own expense in the future.

The Department of Health forum is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is intended for state and county officials, bankers, realtors, developers, resort owners, landowners, and emergency responders. The day's agenda will include expert speakers, informative display tables, and facilitated discussions of the major issues. Presenters include the Hawaii Department of Health, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and munitions disposal contractors on hand to answer questions and share their knowledge. There is no charge to attend, however, space is limited and confirmed reservations are required.

Anyone interested in attending the event should contact Paul Chong, DOH coordinator, at paul.chong@doh.hawaii.gov.

#