

# Explosives Safety Trumps Air Pollution Threat

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**Tooele, Utah** After discovering that a 17-ton cache of ordnance was at risk of self-ignition, the Tooele Army Depot detonated 28,000 target simulators over nine days this month, even on days when particulate pollution blanketed the Salt Lake Valley.

According to Rick Page of the Utah Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste, State officials granted the munitions depot an emergency permit to explode the simulators when it was discovered that some explosive material was crystallizing on the outside of the packaging. This set up a conflict between public safety and public health in which officials determined that it was necessary to continue detonating the old ordnance and open burning on days when the "clearing index," a measure of atmospheric mixing, is low and conducive to pollution buildup.

Parts of Tooele County are included in the Salt Lake airshed, which is out of compliance with federal standards for fine particulate and is currently saddled with unhealthy levels of air pollution. Officials continue to try to balance the safety concerns of accidental detonation, including probable fire hazards, with the threats of the air pollution.