

Civilian UXO Casualties in the United States

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'If you cannot measure it then you cannot improve it' ---Lord Kelvin 1856

On September 30, 2001, a list compiled by the [USEPA](#) listed 126 past civilian UXO incidents in the United States. The total number of fatalities and injuries included in the data details available was only 19. In sharp contrast the ATF&E (Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives) had a list of 4,438 UXO events. This number includes multiple casualties but is vague as to detailed information regarding them. While the Joint Services maintain their Explosives Safety Mishap Analysis Module (ESMAM) for the military, the civilian UXO encounters remain under reported and under evaluated.

In order for an accurate assessment of the problems and scope of these situations, an organized information collection system modeled after the Database for Demining Accidents (DDAS) would be most advantageous. The DDAS is an international program of documenting harmful occurrences affecting deminers in the field. These accidents are listed and described revealing specific details and then critically analyzed according to best safe practices. Photos, medical reports and other important data are added as it becomes available. The result is a clear study of each tragedy and a validation for improved methodologies which includes funding considerations. This efficient format leaves few questions unanswered as it improves the overall safety education of everyone who views it.

Congressman Blumenauer, the head of the US UXO Political Caucus, spoke during a congressional hearing on May 9, 2002. He stated that there have been over 65 deaths in this country due to UXO encounters. At this time the Department of Defense Explosive Safety Board (DDESB) had listed only 30 UXO accidents dating back to 1943. During a UXO conference in Quebec (2009) a US Army representative gave a lecture where he reported less than 20 UXO incidents going back to 1915. These contradictory reports only reinforce the need to have one major source for reporting casualties. Each statistic should have clearly defined criteria so that comparisons can be effectively collated.

With regard to UXO accidents: is the problem getting better or worse? How will we know what the safety needs are if we cannot accurately view all of the information concerning these events on one efficient website?

It is clear that all of the reporting criteria and format must be standardized. In so doing a comprehensive database will accurately reflect what is going on throughout the world. Using international standards for all countries, including the United States, is the logical way forward.