Lessons Learned
Safe Disposal of
Army Ammunition Plants

AMSOS-SF

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Why We Decontaminate and Dispose Carefully

1. Decontamination and disposal of Army Ammunition Plant buildings, equipment, and land poses an immediate severe threat to those we hire to do our work. Furthermore, improper decontamination and disposal is a threat to the who ever buys our equipment, our buildings or our land. We can do it safely, but it is not cheap. When built in the 1940s, designers gave little thought to eventual disposal. Neither did plant operators or the Army when these plants were laid away. Safely decontaminating and disposing of an Army Ammunition Plants requires, above all else, a deep commitment to protect our workers and our customers from it's dangers. Careful analysis, long ranged planning, and experience in this type of work are a must. We must not use a shrinking budget as the excuse for cutting corners. This pictorial guide shows the dangers we face.

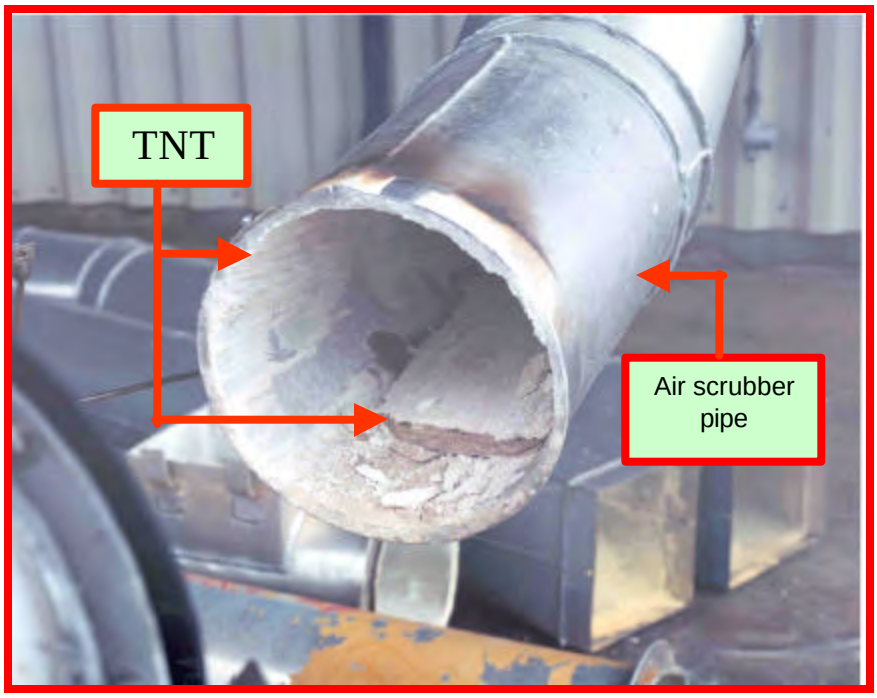
2. Joliet Army Ammunition Plant. The cutting of a process pipe ignited explosive residue causing the damage shown below. Fortunately, the contractor used remote cutting techniques, thereby keeping people away from site. Picture in your mind a person standing over the pipe trying to cut it open with hack saw or a cutting torch. The explosion would have killed him.

As far as we know, when the operating contractor laid away this building in the 1970s, he followed proper procedure by flushing the pipe. The flushing was intended to remove large quantities of explosives, but cannot guarantee complete removal of all explosives. The 3X designation means that dangerous quantities of explosives could still remain. In this case, they did remain.

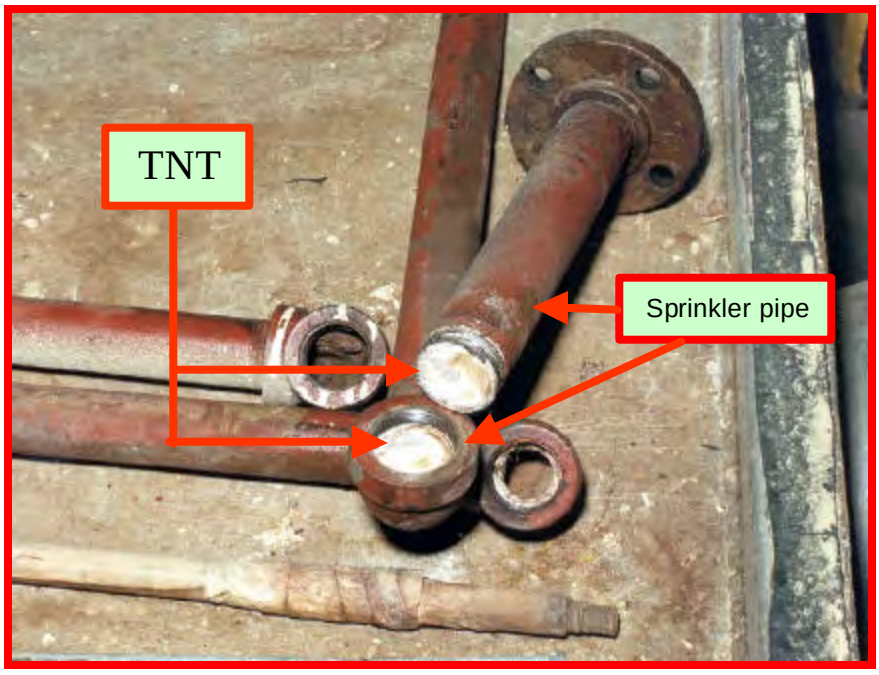
3. Joliet AAP. The explosives shown below also came from a "decontaminated" building. As with the pipe above, the building and its equipment were labeled "3X". This building was also laid away in the 1970s.

4. Joliet AAP. More explosives recovered from "3X" decontaminated equipment.

5. Louisiana AAP. TNT in a laid away air scrubber.



6. Louisiana AAP. TNT in a sprinkler pipe. Visual proof that explosives do migrate to places you would not suspect. Only careful planning and a cautious approach can avoid disaster.



7. Joliet AAP. Operating a remotely operated jackhammer. One of many remote operations needed to safety dismantle explosive-contaminated buildings.

8. Joliet AAP. This explosion occurred during the remote disassembly of dust collection equipment and other machines.

9. Joliet AAP. This explosion occurred during remote cutting of a decontaminated (3X) process water pipe.