



ER Site No. 61A: Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Blast Area

ADS: 1334

Operable Unit: Central Coyote Test Area

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Site History

ER Site 61 was identified as Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site in the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments Act (HSWA) Module. For investigation purposes it was subdivided into three subsites; 61A, [61B](#), and [61C](#). Site [61B](#) is still an active site and ownership was transferred to Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) in May 1995. Site [61C](#) was used as a storage and machine shop facility and was investigated and discussed separately [ER Site 61C](#). Based on available evidence Site 61A was used for at least two testing episodes although no records have been found to document the exact nature of these tests.

ER Site 61A, Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Blast Area, is an inactive site located on Schoolhouse Mesa, northeast of Demolition Range Road and south of Coyote Springs Road and covers approximately 33.92 acres of federally owned land controlled by the United States Air Force (USAF). The southwest corner of Site 61A encloses [ER Site 9](#).

The most prominent feature at Site 61A is a rectangular, cleared (i.e., graded) area oriented southwest to northeast. It is approximately 140-ft wide and 300-ft long. A small hill is just south of the cleared area and a 1- to 2-foot high soil mound (Mound 1) extended along the southern side of the cleared area and base of the hill. The hill has a wood post that may have been a claim marker on it's crest. Two access roads were graded from the southwest edge of the cleared area to the vicinity of [ER Site 9](#). Three shattered concrete slab pieces, which once formed one large slab, are present northwest of the graded area. A second soil mound (Mound 2) was located northwest of the cleared area. The site is covered with fragments of metal and cast plastic resin, with the heaviest concentrations on and around the cleared area.

Although no test records have been located, at least two types of testing took place at ER Site 61A. One type of testing probably involved the destructive testing of weapon transport containers since Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) personnel have identified the scattered debris pieces as those typically found in these containers. The second type of tests involved the concrete slabs. All three slab pieces have a blast or impact pit on their surface, shrapnel or fragment scars, and are fractured throughout. No specific test activities that would have produced these effects have been identified. Core holes are present near the four corners of the originally, one-piece concrete slab. The diameter of these core holes are smaller than the diameter of several concrete cylinders found in this area. These cylinders are made with cement and local rock fragments for aggregate, and speculation is that the strength of the resultant concrete was incorrect so the one-piece slab was brought to the site for the testing. The container testing apparently occurred prior to, and after the cleared area was graded since debris fragments were found mixed in with the Mound 1 soil and scattered on the cleared area surface.

Based on aerial photograph review, this site was in operation after 1961 but before 1967. The dual roads, concrete slabs, and cleared area were first visible in a 1967 aerial photograph. No other changes, other than revegetation of the site are apparent between 1967 and 1991 aerial photographs.

Potential hazardous debris associated with ER Site 61A include unexploded ordnance, high explosives (UXO/HE) and depleted uranium (DU).

Previous Investigations - The structures associated with ER Site 61A were not identified during the investigation conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Assessment and Response Program (CEARP) or the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Facility Assessment (RFA).

In November 1993, KAFB Explosive Ordnance Disposal conducted a surface UXO/HE survey of ER Site 61A. This survey was completed in conjunction with surveys of ER Sites [9](#) and [20](#). One live groundburst simulator and approximately 1 lb of HE pieces were located and removed during this combined survey. The HE pieces were found just north of the concrete slabs at Site 61A. Other expended items collected and removed include six smoke grenades, two flare illuminating cartridges, and three 40-mm white star parachute cartridges.

A Phase 1 survey was conducted at Site 61A in conjunction with Sites [7](#), [61C](#), and [20](#) during February and April 1994. Since Site 61A encloses Site [9](#), all relevant radiological data were considered to belong to Site 61A. During this survey, 63 point sources and 11 area sources with gamma radiation activity 30 percent above the natural background activity of 12 microrentgens per hour were identified at Sites 61A and [9](#). Yellow uranium oxide (weathered DU) was found in the soil at several of the area source anomalies, and DU metal fragments were found at some of the point-source anomalies.

Constituents of Concern

Metals
HE

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
Semivolatile Organic Compounds (SVOCs)
Radionuclides

Current Hazards

There are no current hazards at this site related to residual minimal contamination in the surface or subsurface soils.

Current Status of Work

The RFI Work Plan was submitted to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) in November 1994. A radiological Voluntary Corrective Measure (VCM) to remove point sources at Sites 61 A and 9 and excavate a pit with buried radioactive waste near Site 9 was conducted between March 1995 and October 1996.

The debris mounds were dismantled and sampled in January 1997. A general trash pick-up was also conducted at the same time. RCRA Facility Investigation (RFI) sampling was conducted in January 1997 and March-April 1998. A risk-based No Further Action (NFA) Proposal was submitted to the NMED for Site 61A in September 1998. In December 1999, NMED indicated that the site was acceptable for NFA. The NFA was approved by NMED in July 2000 after completing the public review and permit modification process.

Future Work Planned

No future work is planned.

Waste Volume Estimated/Generated

Approximately 335 55-drums of radioactive waste were generated for the combined Sites 9/61A rad VCM, of which, 330 drums were associated with Site 61A. The debris mound sampling and trash removal generated four 55-gallon drums of nonhazardous debris.

Information for ER Site 61A was last updated Nov 7, 2001.