

Environmental Restoration Project



ER Site No. 61B: Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Cratering Area

ADS: Not Applicable

Operable Unit: Site ownership transferred to Kirtland AFB May 199

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Site History

ER Site 61 was identified as Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site in the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984 Module. ER Site 61B, Cratering Area, covers approximately 41.79 acres on federally owned land controlled by the United States Air Force (USAF). Site 61B lies within the active Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) range which is east of Lovelace Road and north of Optical Range Road.

Early explosives testing (cratering experiments) for Operation Plowshare was conducted from approximately 1957-1958 to 1963 at Site 61B. The tests were conducted in the area immediately north of Building 9925, and south of the east-west runaway of the old airfield. This area lies within the restricted access area of the active KAFB EOD range. Because the KAFB EOD range is active, only a partial site inspection was conducted in December 1993.

According to an interview with the Operation Plowshare Project Manager, Site 61B was test used small (2- to 8-pound) high explosives (HE) charges and produced craters with diameters less than 3 feet. Larger tests were performed at the Coyote Canyon Blast Area or the Nevada Test Site (NTS). No radioactive materials were used in the cratering experiments and no buildings or support structures were needed.

Interviews and historical aerial photos indicate that U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) testing also occurred in the EOD range area, including the area of Site 61B. Aerial Photos from the 1950s show several cleared areas around the old airfield and the current KAFB EOD range area. Interviewees said that this was a DOD activity for vulnerability testing of aircraft. The aircraft were blown up to determine vulnerability and shielding methods for air crews.

Based on the background investigation of the Schoolhouse Mesa area in 1993 and 1994, several specific Sandia testing activities that occurred in the vicinity of the Schoolhouse Mesa area were identified, and Site 61 was subdivided into three subsites as follows:

[Site 61A](#), Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Blast Area, Site 61B, Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Cratering Area, and

[Site 61C](#), Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Schoolhouse Building

ER Site 61B was found to be located approximately 1.2 miles south-southwest of the Schoolhouse Building, within the controlled area of the KAFB EOD Range.

Previous Investigations - ER Site 61, the Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site, was identified during investigations conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Assessment and Response Program (CEARP). Little was known about the site beyond its use as an explosive test area. No conclusions were reached about this site in the CEARP report.

There may be ordnance and ordnance debris within this area from current DOD activities not associated with ER Site 61B. The area is restricted because of the hazard presented by the current EOD activities. An unexploded ordnance (UXO)/HE survey has not been conducted at ER Site 61B. Access limitations also have prevented a surface radiation survey from being conducted for this site. However, radionuclides are not expected to be a contaminant from testing at ER Site 61B.

Because this area is currently within the active KAFB EOD range, which is a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)-permitted open burning/open detonation (OB/OD) unit for the destruction of ordnance, site ownership was transferred to Kirtland Air Force Base in May 1995.

Constituents of Concern

Unknown

Current Hazards

To be Determined.

Current Status of Work

The responsibility for this site has been transferred to KAFB.

Future Work Planned

None

Waste Volume Estimated/Generated

N/A

Information for ER Site 61B was last updated Jul 20, 2000.