



US Army Corps of Engineers
Norfolk District



City of Hampton

Media Advisory

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers begins second phase of ordnance sweep at Buckroe Beach

What & When : U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordnance experts will begin the second phase of the ordnance sweep at Buckroe Beach on November 5. This investigation is expected to take 6 to 8 weeks and will be completed by the end of January. This follow-up effort is being conducted as an additional safety measure before the 2004 beach replenishment project.

The Corps will host a media opportunity on November 6 from 1 until 3 p.m. Corps representatives will meet reporters in front of the Lifeguard station for a field equipment demonstration and photo opportunities.

Who: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working in cooperation with the City of Hampton, U.S. EPA, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to educate the public, schedule work, and mark off the portions of the beach being investigated.

How: Ordnance field crews will begin by testing their geophysical equipment on site (also referred to as the geophysical prove out). The crews will be using the same type of field equipment as was used during Phase 1 this past spring. Once the equipment has been properly calibrated, the field crew will establish a 50- to 200-foot safety perimeter around each 100-foot by 100-foot investigation area where the crews are working. The teams are also using a “mag and flag” operation that involves hand held magnetometers. They will flag any anomalies for excavation and further analysis (also referred to as intrusive investigations).

If ordnance is found during the intrusive investigation, most planned detonations will occur between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. the same day. The only exception would be detonations required in the tidal zone that will be tied to the periods around low tide. Residents within 200 feet of an intrusive investigation will be required to evacuate for up to 2 hours between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. and will be given a 24-hour notice prior to any planned investigation within the 200-foot perimeter. Prior to any planned detonations, the U.S. Army Corps will notify the City of Hampton, local fire and police departments.

This second phase of the investigation will involve a full-scale geophysical survey of the entire beach using the latest ordnance detection technology as a second review for quality control.

The city will continue to restrict digging and metal detecting on the beach until the Army Corps has finished both phases of the investigation and completed its final study of the beach.

Where: This phase of the investigation will include approximately 19 acres of public beach from Pilot Avenue to the former fishing pier and will extend from the edge of the boardwalk out to waist deep water at low tide.

Background: Prior to the 2003 beach season, Army Corps ordnance experts removed eleven ordnance items during Phase 1 of the ordnance investigation. These 40 mm and 75 mm ordnance items were found more than 30 inches below the surface. All were deemed to be inert (containing no explosive material) and removed safely. No ordnance items were found on Buckroe Beach during the 2003 beach season or after Hurricane Isabel.

This ordnance investigation was initiated in May 2003 in response to the military ordnance found during the 2002 beach season. It was buried in 12 to 18 inches of sand in shallow water. The ordnance items resemble large bullets and are approximately 12 inches long and 3 inches in diameter. Officials suspect that the source of ordnance at Buckroe Beach was a 1990 beach replenishment effort that inadvertently dredged offshore sand that likely contained the ordnance. The ordnance items that were found were used during World War I and II for coastal defense and are no longer used by the military.

Why Significant: This effort is being done to ensure public safety at this popular beach. Following the investigation, the Corps will work with the interagency team to assess long-term safety measures to prevent ordnance at the beach in the future.