

Maryland State Fire Marshal

News Release

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MILITARY ORDNANCE SAFETY SWEEP CONDUCTED AT NEWTOWNE NECK STATE PARK

ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MD (July 2, 2013) – The State Fire Marshal's Office Bomb Squad Underwater Hazardous Devices Team, Maryland State Police Dive Team, Baltimore County Bomb Squad, Maryland State Police Tactical Medic, Maryland Natural Resources Police and the Maryland Park Service conducted a two-day ordnance sweep operation at Newtowne Neck State Park located in Leonardtown on Thursday, June 27th and Friday, June 28th.

Newtowne Neck State Park has been closed to public access since January 6, 2012 as a direct result of several incidents of citizens finding and reporting military ordnance along the shoreline at the park. Subsequent to those discoveries, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted extensive research into possible military activity on the property and preliminary findings revealed the area had been used as a Recovery Test Field for testing electronic components for anti-aircraft ordnance during World War II. Although the property was once the site of firing ranges, recovery fields and storage bunkers, none of the 57mm projectiles used contained any explosives.

The USACE briefed Maryland Park Service and State Fire Marshal officials on their preliminary findings and a plan was developed to search the park, both on land and underwater for any remaining devices. A thorough sweep of the area revealed 24 projectiles that were collected and rendered safe on scene. The nearby community was notified prior to controlled detonation of the items found and no injuries or property damage occurred during the two-day operation. Discussions continue regarding additional periodic sweep operations, particularly after future storm events which may unearth additional projectiles.

Public access to the area will remain restricted until the Maryland Park Service is able to fully evaluate the findings of the USACE report and the results of the recent sweep operations to ensure that the area is safe for use by Marylanders to enjoy for its intended purpose as a State Park. "Public safety will be paramount in any decision to re-open Newtowne Neck State Park to the public," said Maryland Park Service Superintendent Nita Settina. "We will continue to work with the Corps and the State Fire Marshal Bomb Squad to develop educational materials and response protocols to address the very real possibility that these materials will continue to be discovered at Newtowne Neck."

The Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office Bomb Squad would like to remind all citizens of the potential danger involved with handling military ordnance. Any citizens that have had contact or come into contact with military ordnance or similar objects, should call 911 immediately. The public should be reminded to use the "3R's" as a safe practice. "**Recognize** that any suspicious objects found in the area should not be touched under any circumstances. **Retreat**, or carefully leave the area. **Report** immediately what was found and its approximate location to the police".

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is an agency of the Department of State Police dedicated to helping protect citizens from fire and explosion through a comprehensive program of education, inspection, investigation and fire protection engineering. For more information on fire safety call 1-800-525-3124, log onto our website at: www.mdsp.org/firemarshal and/or <http://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal>.