



# ***Facts About...***

Triumph Explosives Industries  
Burn Pit  
(Non-Master List Site)

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## **Site Location**

The Triumph Explosives (TEI) Burn Pit site is located two miles northwest of Elkton, Maryland on the ATK Launch Systems Group (ATK) property at 55 Thiokol Road, off Nottingham Road, Elkton, Cecil County, Maryland. The ATK Plant itself consists of approximately 620 acres and is situated in a rural industrial setting adjacent to the Triumph Industrial Park. The Burn Pit parcel is found on the USGS Elkton quadrangle map at approximately 39°37.023' north latitude and 75°52.219' west longitude and has Maryland grid coordinates of 651,900 N and 1,118,100 E. The roughly rectangular 19-acre site is bounded on the west by Little Elk Creek and by the ATK facility on all other sides. Land use surrounding the site is primarily industrial, however there is a new area of residential property to the north and west of the site just across Little Elk Creek.

## **Site History**

The site is on the grounds of the 1200-acre former TEI, a World War II era munitions manufacturer. From an unspecified time in 1938 through the end of 1942, TEI operated an open burning pit on a 19-acre portion on the edge of their property. Waste munitions and explosive materials were spread in the pit and allowed to burn until consumed. In late 1942, a plant expansion forced the company to shift the open burning operation across Little Elk Creek to the site of the Elkton Farm Firehole (MD-433).

The property containing the Burn Pit has historically been a munitions and fireworks manufacturing plant (TEI) and recently a plant manufacturing rocket motors and propulsion systems (ATK). Throughout its operational history, the Triumph Explosives Burn Pit site was owned and operated by TEI under contract to the United States Government. Since the 1950s, Thiokol Chemical Company operating under a succession of names has controlled the property (Thiokol Chemical Company, Morton-Thiokol Inc., Cordant Technologies Inc., Thiokol Propulsion, ATK Thiokol; currently ATK Launch Systems Group). ATK manufactures and performs research and development on rocket motors and propulsion systems.

The U.S. Government was identified as a responsible party for TEI. Following identification of the Government as a potentially responsible party the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contracted an investigation of the site operations and ownership history of TEI. In February 1992, TechLaw, Inc prepared the final report for this project.

The TEI Burn Pit was identified through interviews with people that had been employed at the plant during the 1940s. These interviews documented the burn pit as an area for the disposal of waste explosives material and placed the pit in the area of the "new" TEI 40-mm plant. Remnants of the 40-mm plant, which was constructed between 1942 and 1943, remain on the ATK landscape. The Burn Pit was abandoned in favor of the Zeitler Road Firehole when construction placed the 40-mm plant too close to the existing burn pit.



## **Environmental Investigations**

Historical aerial photographs were used to identify three areas of disturbed soil, identified as potential disposal pits. Attempts were made to acquire the exact location of these disturbed areas and translate them to GPS coordinates and grids on a current topographic map of the area.

In March 2007 a geophysical investigations was performed on the suspected disposal areas. NAEVA Geophysics Inc. performed an EM-31 survey over the grid area. This survey did not yield confirmatory information on the location of the burn pit. As a result of the lack of findings a planned combined preliminary assessment/site investigation (PA/SI) was abandoned.

The 1200-acre site of the TEI plant has been the subject of numerous environmental assessments in recent years. Preliminary Assessments (PA) and Site Inspections (SI) have been performed on Triumph Industrial Park, ATK, Central Chemical Company, Maryland Cork, IP Inc., G.E. Railcar, Crouse Bros. Excavating, and Elkton Farm. ATK and GE Railcar are in the midst of corrective actions for the remediation of perchlorate and trichloroethylene contaminant plumes. Elkton Farm is the subject of an EPA planned removal action for remediation of waste munitions associated with the TEI plant.

## **Current Status**

Following the closure of TEI in 1945, the 1200-acre plant was split into a number of different parcels. The parcel on which the burn pit was located became part of the present day ATK site. ATK manufactures and tests solid fuel propellants and continues to operate a solid propellant burn platform in the vicinity of the old burn pit.

Access to the property by land is fenced, guarded, and well controlled; however, access from Little Elk Creek is uncontrolled.

## **Conclusions/Recommendations**

Since ATK has an EPA approved remediation plan for their contaminant plumes, and the area is secured, MDE believes that no action needs to be taken at this time. If future investigations or excavations document suspected waste ordnance on the property then the TEI Burn Pit will need to be readdressed. There is a wealth of knowledge on the groundwater contamination of the area surrounding the suspected munitions disposal area; therefore MDE recommended that no action be taken relative to the site at this time.

## **Contact Person**

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