

“Don’t touch it!”



Eric Labine, Deputy Explosive Safety Officer, shows a slide picturing a practice bomb found in Debert. He stresses even though some of the UXO may look old and rusted there is still potential for doing harm and “Don’t touch it!”.

Story and Photos by Linda Harrington

Debert’s role as a major military encampment during WWII has left the area with some potentially harmful objects lying around. Two information sessions, held at the Debert Hospitality Centre on Feb. 12th drew a mixed crowd of home owners and business owners, all concerned about potential encounters with unexploded explosive ordnances (UXO).

A UXO is defined as any munitions that have been prepared for action, and used, but which remain unexploded. These include bombs, rockets, grenades, artillery shells, flares, mortars and hazardous residues that remain after a partial detonation.

Camp Debert was one of the largest bases in Canada during WWII, and a final staging area for military units embarking overseas. The base included an airfield, large ammunition depot, and many training areas used for mortar, artillery, anti-tank, anti-aircraft, and aircraft practice bombing. In 1971, the Department of National Defence sold the majority of the lands to the Government of Nova Scotia. The land is considered a “legacy site”.

The information session was hosted by the DND UXO and Legacy Sites Program. The Program was created in 2005 and is working to reduce safety risks posed by unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO) at

all “legacy sites” across Canada. According to the Program’s website, “A UXO legacy site is any property that was owned, leased or used by DND but no longer resides within DND’s inventory and for which there exists a UXO risk associated with past Departmental activities.”

The Legacy Program identifies and catalogues legacy sites, assessing the level of risk by the probability of people encountering UXO. Four areas within the former explosive demolition area at Debert have been outlined as “activity areas”. These include the 4.4 km of Mi’kmawey Debert Interpretive Trails, 30km of recreational/ATV trails, Commercial Properties along McElmon Road and undeveloped lands within the Industrial Park and wooded areas.

Eric Labine, Deputy Explosive Safety Officer, explained the risks associated with each of the four areas, noting the Interpretive Trail and Commercial Properties are considered low risk areas, with the ATV trails considered higher risk because the trails have eroded over time.

He gave as an example the fact over 2500 flame floats were recently recovered from a burial pit off one of the ATV trails. Other UXO previously encountered included 11.5 inch practice bombs, 105mm projectile shells, smoke mortars, smoke grenades, practice rockets and marine location markers.



A map outlining the Former Explosives Demolition Area, highlighting four distinct activity areas.

A public works employee at the meeting asked Mr. Lavine about potential risks for people, like himself, who may be digging in the area. He was told there was a low risk associated with digging around existing sewer and water lines, and no risk outside the legacy site area, but suggested contacting officials at the Legacy Program if digging in other areas located within the former explosive demolition area.

Business and land owner Gary MacKenzie was equally concerned, noting he owns 16 acres within the outlined zones. Project Director Ian Lau provided MacKenzie with contact information for appropriate professionals who can assist him. Undeveloped areas within the legacy site require special permits through the County of Colchester, and UXO information is provided at that time.

Debert Fire Chief Wade Jennings inquired about the area up on Staples Brook Road, which was formerly a Rifle Range. “We have been told this is a “NO GO” zone,” said Chief Jennings, meaning the Brigade is not permitted to enter the property because of the potential UXO hazards.

Mr. Lau explained the Staples Brook area is actually considered a low risk as it is now a wildlife refuge area, with signs posted to keep people out of the area. Risk is related to potential human contact and in this case people are not using the area.

There have been several deaths and serious injuries

caused by UXO explosions in Canada and caution is always required when entering UXO legacy sites.

If someone encounters an object and they suspect it may be a UXO they are asked to follow three R formula- “Recognize, Retreat and Report”. Do not touch the item, but mark its location. Leave the area the same way you entered and call 911 or the local police to report what you have found.

UXO fall under two categories- 1) Safe to move and 2) Must be blown in place. The 2500 flame floats found in the burial site along the ATV trail fell under the “safe to move” category.

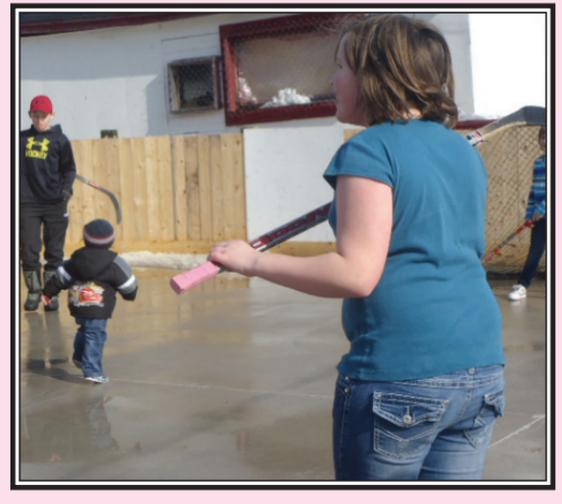
Surface sweeps have been done on the ATV trails, using metal detectors, and anything of concern has been removed.

Residents questioned whether a scan of the entire area will be carried out. Mr. Lau suggested areas of heightened concern, such as the some of the ATV trails, are being looked at more closely using more sophisticated technology (capable of reading down to 1meter) but the area is too large to cover every inch. He suggested it would be too expensive to do such a project, so they will deal with them as the situations arise.

District 9 Councillor Doug MacInnes attended the evening info session and commented on the “expense” saying, “It would be much less expensive to dig up unexploded ordnance than it is to

Five Islands Winter Carnival

Within the last year, dedicated volunteers spearheaded an initiative to rebuild the Five Islands Outdoor Rink with a concrete surface and new boards. The weather didn’t cooperate for the winter carnival. Proceeding undeterred it was time to still make great use of the rink, ice or no ice. Kristyn Walton reports that ball hockey was enjoyed by the kids, parents and even some energetic grandparents! Must have been the delicious chilli working some magic. (Kristyn Walton Photos)

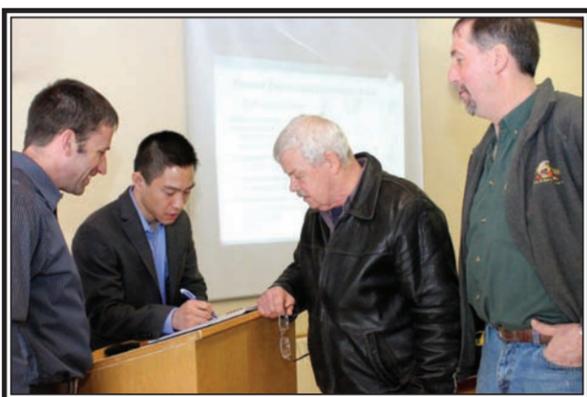


dig up 13,000 year old paleo Indian artifacts.” He says he hopes, “that all this sudden attention doesn’t create souvenir and treasure hunters.”

Anyone wanting more information is asked to contact the DND UXO Legacy Sites Program at 1-800-207-

0599 or visit the website at .A safety handbook for work on UXO legacy sites is available free of charge.

If you see UXO: Call 911



Debert Fire Chief Wade Jennings (right) and Brigade member Don Geldart discuss their concerns with Eric Labine- Deputy Explosive Safety Officer (left) and UXO Debert Legacy Project Director Ian Lau.



UXO Debert Legacy Project Director Ian Lau points out some examples of unexploded explosive ordnance found in the Debert area.

GLENHOLME GENERAL STORE

Open 8-8 Weekdays

Open 9-8 Weekends

Mobile Phone Cards
Long Distance Airtime
Hunting Licences
Groceries & Snacks
Gifts & Cards

Spend a Toonie, Get a Movie
2-day Rental, \$174 + tax = \$200

662-4510

Think BACKUP...before trouble strikes!

Ask us for your best BACK-UP solution.

Failsafe

Computer Services

www.failsafe-computer.com

- COMPUTER & LAPTOP SALES
- WIRELESS/ROUTER SECURITY
- VIRUS & SPYWARE REMOVAL
- CABLES & ACCESSORIES

10 Dominion Street

893-2171

askus@failsafe-computer.com

Proudly Educating our Customers in Plain English

SPECIALIZING IN BUMBLEBEES
for wild blueberry, field crop & orchard pollination.

Sand River Farms

Thane Fullerton

Koppert Canada Agent
thanefullerton@yahoo.ca
R.R. #1, Parrsboro, NS B0M 1S0

Business: 902-254-2002

Home: 902-254-3286

Fax: 902-254-2538