



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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Washington, DC

Alert 06-10

EXPLOSIVES SAFETY GUIDE RECOGNIZE, RETREAT, REPORT

Just days ago, a 145 foot commercial fishing vessel operating in the vicinity of Hudson Canyon, located South of Long Island, New York dredged up 10 old (circa 1914) munitions canisters that contained mustard gas. One of the canisters broke open while it was being brought onboard the vessel and four crewmembers were exposed to the gas. They experienced chemical burns and respiratory problems. As a result of the exposure the boat was required to be decontaminated and therefore unable to fish for several days. Furthermore, its catch was seized.

Mustard Gas, also known as Sulfur Mustard, is a chemical weapon developed and used during World War I. It was delivered in liquid or gas form and caused blistering of the skin, eye irritation possibly leading to blindness, and severe lung injury if inhaled.

The incidental discovery of munitions at sea during fishing, scuba diving and other evolutions has been an occasional problem for decades. Any such discoveries, handling of and or landing of any unknown weaponry or components onboard vessels can have catastrophic results. To additionally complicate the situation, these items can be well encrusted with marine growth and barely recognizable. Thus, the discovery of any unknown / unidentifiable objects must be treated with extreme care and caution.

The U.S. Army Technical Center for Explosive Safety provides a Maritime Industry 3Rs Explosives Safety Guide at the following URL. <http://aec.army.mil/usaec/cleanup/images/mmrp-maritime.pdf> It emphasizes Recognizing, Retreating and Reporting when munitions (unexploded ordnance) are found and provides useful imagery to assist in identifying these objects.

In light of this recent event, the Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that

- any persons involved in commercial fishing industries and any similar activities, review and update navigational charts to ensure "Explosives Dumping Areas" are well marked and identified and that all vessel operators know to give these areas wide berth when towing gear,
- review 3R material from the URL above, and
- report any discovery immediately to the **National Response Center** at **1-800-424-8802 for proper response**. (Alternatively, the CG may be notified via channel 16.)

This safety alert is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational or material requirement. Please visit <http://fishsafe.info> for additional fishing safety information. Developed by the Office of Investigations and Analysis and Commercial Fishing Vessel Division, U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C.. Questions may be addressed to the sender.
