



Defence
Infrastructure
Organisation

**Salisbury Plain Training Area
Newsletter
September 2018**

www.gov.uk/government/publications/salisbury-plain-training-area-spta-newsletter

This Newsletter can be found at the above link

The DIO runs a Twitter account for news and updates on the Salisbury Plain Training Area using the Twitter hashtag #modonthepain. This account now has over 6000 followers. If you'd like to follow us go to:
www.twitter.com/mod_dio

September 2018 Newsletter

After a quiet August on SPTA the training quickly ramps up with the start of EX WESSEX STORM from 7-22 September. The Battle Group is supported by a tracked AS90 gun regiment who will be conducting live firing into the impact area. As well as EX WESSEX STORM armoured manoeuvre training will take place across all areas throughout the month with at least five local sub-units on the Plain each day. Activity will peak in the week 21 – 25 September when the Land Warfare Centre Armoured and Armoured Infantry courses deploy on Exercise COMBAT TEAM. The public should be aware that tank crossings over the A360, A345, A338, B390, and the C22 (Tilshead to Chitterne) roads will be very busy and if conditions are wet mud clearance parties will be working on the crossings. In dry weather conditions dust clouds may produce a hazard at these crossings. Notice is given that the training areas in the Copehill Down and Bourne Valley (SPTA East) areas will be heavily used by tracked and wheeled armoured vehicles over this period and that recreational use of the Salisbury Plain military lands is to be restricted to public rights of way only as per the byelaws.

Please report all concerns to the Complaints Help Desk on 01980 620819 in the first instance.

Related Links - Gov.uk/DIO

There are two recent Defence Infrastructure Organisation blogs that relate to keeping safe whilst legally using the Military Lands on Salisbury Plain, please take the time to read them - the links can be found below:

<https://insidedio.blog.gov.uk/2018/04/19/how-to-risk-your-life-on-the-military-training-estate/>

<https://insidedio.blog.gov.uk/2018/04/24/six-ridiculous-excuses-for-risking-your-life-on-the-training-estate/>

Monthly firing calendar for Sept 2018 (subject to change)

1. Artillery live firing days from areas 6, 7 and 8 (east of Chitterne):
Nil
2. Artillery live firing days on Salisbury plain (east) (north of Bulford & west of Tidworth):
17
3. Late firing days on Larkhill/Westdown danger area (north of Larkhill):
04, 06, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, 27
4. Non-firing days on Larkhill/Westdown danger area:

01, 02, 08, 09, 22, 23, 29, 30

5. Non-firing days on Bulford fixed firing ranges:

01, 02, 08, 09, 22, 23, 29, 30

6. Late firing days on Imber ranges, areas 1, 2, 3, 4 (east of Warminster)

04, 06, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, 27

Note: Ex Wessex Storm from 4th Sept to 21st Sept. All range flags will remain up in the name of public safety. Royal Wessex Yeomanry in the East weekend 22 – 23 Sept.

Close down of Larkhill/Westdown Danger Area, is PM 05th to AM 20th Aug.

Close down of Bulford fixed range is PM 10th to AM 28th Aug.

Byelaw Governance – Antisocial Behaviour

Parish members are encouraged to report all illegal activity on Salisbury plain to the Wiltshire Police. If serious crime is experienced 999 should be dialled, and for all other reports including: illegal off-roading, illegal motor biking, drone use, poaching, hare coursing, petty theft, camping on MoD land, kite flying please call 101 and list the call as 'antisocial behaviour' and a byelaw violation. Once reported please inform range control on the Plainwatch number: 01980 674700 or email PLAINWATCH@landmarc.mod.uk.

Access

Access to SPTA is regulated by Salisbury Plain Military Lands, Bulford, Larkhill and Imber Range Byelaws. Always comply with local signs and flags. Rights of way in Range Danger Areas are closed when red flags are flying. This newsletter is published up to 6 weeks before the event and changes may occur. Access timings for the next week can be found on the SPTA Walks Line: (01980) 674763.

Imber Ranges. The public are excluded at all times, except when the roads are specifically opened. Planned opening dates for 2018 are as follows

Event	Open	Closed
Summer	1800hrs Fri 17 Aug 18	0800hrs Fri 24 Aug 18
Christmas	1800hrs Thur 27 Dec 18	0800hrs Wed 02 Jan 19

A leaflet on public access to Imber is available online and should be read in advance of any visit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435909/Imber_A5_Leaflet-final_Online_version.pdf

Note. Dates may change if operational training needs dictate.

What Can You Do To Reduce Crime On Salisbury Plain?

There has been an increase of thefts from motor vehicles that have been left unattended on the training area. Owners are reminded not to leave valuables in plain sight. **If any crime is taking place call 999, (or 101) and do not under any circumstances challenge the offenders.**

Health and Safety reminder for ALL Military Training Areas and Ranges:

- Do not touch or tamper with Military debris.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Clean your footwear before you enter your car or home.

Managing wildfires and much more on the Defence Training Estate

Hi, I'm Brigadier Simon Stockley, Head of the DIO's Overseas Region and Defence Training Estate (OR&DTE). My role includes the provision of military training facilities here in the UK, and around the world, to enable our Armed Forces to be ready for operations and deployments. We manage around two-thirds of the 223,800 hectares that the MOD owns, and have rights over a further 207,400 hectares. Our job is to make sure that our Service Personnel have sufficient training areas, with a variety of terrain and climates to represent those places they are likely to serve. Most importantly is the provision of a safe place to train 365 days of the year.

We are also responsible for the maintenance, preservation and conservation of the land, allowing it to offer much needed habitats for a variety of flora and fauna to thrive, and for the enjoyment of the general-public now and for future generations.

Increase in summer fires

Fires on the training estate are not uncommon all year-round, however the good weather that we have all been enjoying has increased the risk of fire. Most notable were the unintentional fires at Middlewick (Essex), Otterburn (Northumberland) and Salisbury Plain (Wiltshire), which were in part influenced by the nature of the essential military training being conducted at the time.

The importance of the Range Danger Area

It's important to understand that the military fires on the training estate aren't caused deliberately and usually start, and are contained, in the Range Danger Area (or impact zone) – this is an area in the heart of the training area that is out of bounds to the public. These areas are largely constructed with the potential for fires in mind, and include stone tracks to prevent the transfer of a fire onto the wider estate.

Red flags fly during the day (and red lights are lit at night) to let the public know when the area is out of bounds. Live munitions, fast moving vehicles, low flying aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles are all used during live military manoeuvres and in the Range Danger Areas you will find unexploded military debris. Due to the dangerous nature of the Range Danger Area fires that start there cannot be extinguished by the Fire Service, or the MOD, but need to be left to burn-out on their own.

Salisbury Plain Fires

An important international training exercise took place on Salisbury Plain in July, and despite temporary restrictions on ammunition likely to initiate a fire, a fire still broke out and continued to burn for several days. The smoke plume, largely the effect of burning gorse, affected large parts of Wiltshire and was created by a combination of the hot, dry weather conditions, the wind direction and the already dry ground conditions.

There was no threat to life or property, and although we were unable to put the fire out, as it was in the impact area, we worked closely with Wiltshire Council, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and Public Health England to update the public on the situation and to advise on the best precautions to take. Any advice on how we might do this better in the future would be welcome.

We fully appreciate the inconvenience that the smoke caused to the communities living in and around the Plain, especially those suffering from existing breathing conditions, such as asthma, and that the advice to shut doors and windows when it was so hot was far from ideal. However, this advice was offered by the public health authorities across the country. We take the safety of our military personnel and the public seriously and we did all that we could to reassure local-residents and to reduce the risks.

The impact on the environment

Although fires can have a negative effect on our neighbours, there are also some benefits, hard as that may be to believe.

Fires can often remove alien trees and plants that compete with native species for nutrients and space, and the removal of thick undergrowth means that sunlight can reach the lower levels, enabling regrowth and regeneration. Fires also return nutrients to the soil by burning dead or decaying matter. They can also act as a natural disinfectant, removing disease-ridden plants and harmful insects from the ecosystem. In many places across the world fires are set intentionally for the purposes of forest management, farming, restoration and greenhouse gas reduction. Having spent time in the fire affected area only last week, I can report that the re-growth already is extraordinary, with a healthy green sward in direct contrast to the sun-dried unaffected areas.

Our role in fire management

My team takes our role in trying to prevent and control fires very seriously. We monitor the risk of fires across the training estate throughout the year, working hard to maintain a balance between the needs of our military training

audience and the local communities in which we sit. We use a range of measures to prevent and control range fires, including grazing programmes – agreed with local farmers to keep the grass short during the summer months; ammunition bans during extremely dry conditions; and, fire watch schemes to ensure fires are constantly monitored.

What you can do to keep safe and reduce the risk of fire on the training estate

Safety of the military and the public is of paramount importance to us. If you're out enjoying access to the estate on the public bye-ways, please remember the following basic principles:

- Don't pick anything up.
- Drive safely and in accordance with the law and stick to Public Rights of Way or Permissive Rights of Way that are open to the public.
- Stay out when red flags are flying, or red lights are lit.
- Check firing times online; they can sometimes change so what you see on the ground takes precedence.

If you see a fire on the training estate, you should call your local Range Control and / or local Fire Service. You should never attempt to fight a fire yourself.

Chris Shears
Major (Training Safety Officer)
for
Senior Training Safety Officer
Salisbury Plain Training Area