



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville
P.O. 1600
Huntsville, AL 35807-4301

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Facilities Reduction project mitigates explosive hazard at Tooele depot

By Debra Valine
U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville

TOOELE ARMY DEPOT, Utah — A project to remove an ammunition processing building at Tooele Army Depot presented an explosive challenge to the Facilities Reduction group at the Huntsville Center.

Building 1245, which was used as a munitions (Trinitrotoluene [TNT]) washout facility, contained equipment likely coated with unknown amounts of explosive residue that made traditional demolition dangerous.

The building contained equipment that was too large to remove and had to be rendered “safe” for unrestricted release as scrap before the building could be demolished. To get to that point in the project, Huntsville Center had to ensure the explosive danger was eliminated.

Larry McFarland, the project manager at Tooele, and Huntsville Center Technical Manager Kevin Healy turned to PIKA International, a company that uses a process called thermal convection, to destroy explosive residue. Thermal convection uses controlled heat from a standard source, similar to how a self-cleaning oven works, to destroy explosive residue in a building, rendering it safer for a “near normal” demolition effort.

Using a thermal convection system (TCS) is a first for Huntsville Center.

Finding innovative solutions for facility removal is not new for Huntsville Center. Each project is unique and project managers look for the best technical method of removal at the least cost to the customer. Other examples of creative facility removal have included implosion, sealed bid auctions and the establishment of a directed demolitions team.

“PIKA’s proposal to prepare the building using the TCS and demolition of Bldg. 1245, resulted in a savings to the government of approximately 60 percent of the original program costs,” Healy said.

Preliminary demolition activities started May 29. Demolition is expected to be complete by early to mid-July.

PIKA may be able to speed that process up just a bit. When the initial preparatory operations were conducted at the site June 15, hidden explosive residue exploded, causing the corrugated tin building shell to crumble and come off the steel beam frame.

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