

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A MINED AREA OR DISCOVER 'SUSPECTED' EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE/DEVICES



## SAFETY MESSAGE TO HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

### INTRODUCTION

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Due to active hostilities in various parts of Myanmar, everyone is at risk of unexpectedly encountering an explosive weapon. This applies to you! What **MUST** you do if something like this happened to you?

### RECOGNITION OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE

Explosive Ordnance (EO) includes all munitions that contain explosives, nuclear fusion or fission materials, and biological or chemical agents. In Myanmar, the most common EO are landmines, artillery, rockets, mortars, air-dropped bombs, grenades, small arms ammunition, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). EO come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They may be manufactured or improvised and are usually made of metal, plastic and/or wood.



These illustrations show a sample of some of the most common EO in Myanmar. Accurately identifying landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and IEDs requires extensive training and experience. As a general rule, always regard unusual objects with suspicion.

# GENERAL SAFETY MESSAGES



Never approach or touch landmines, unexploded or abandoned ordnance, IEDs or other suspicious objects for any reason



Never venture into known dangerous areas, explore military installations or equipment



Do not touch anything that appears strange or out of place lying on the ground or hanging from a tree



Always be alert for other clues of possible danger



Keep others informed about your travel plans



Prior to travel, obtain information on known dangerous areas



Never collect mines, ERW, UXO, IEDs or other military hardware



Be aware of local warning signs and always respect them



Provide important safety information to others

## WARNING SIGNS, CLUES, AND DANGEROUS AREAS

The most effective way to ensure your safety and prevent accidents is to recognize when you may be in or approaching an area that is dangerous. Usually, people who lay mines do not mark the area. However, mine action organizations and local communities do erect official and temporary markings of known dangerous areas.





## Official warning sign

- Red background
- Triangular or rectangular
- Attached to post, stake or tree
- Skull and crossbones
- Written words (“danger”, “landmines”)
- Warning/caution tape

## Improvised warning sign

- Homemade signs erected by local community
- Paths blocked by stones, tree branches or crossed bamboo sticks
- X-shaped notches in trees
- Stone circles around UXO





## Warning clues

- Visible mines, UXO and IEDs
- Signs of fighting or military activity
- Animal carcasses or skeleton
- Deserted villages
- Overgrown fields and areas
- Altered local behavior



## Signs of military activity

- Trenches, dykes, and bunkers
- Damaged/abandoned military and civilian vehicles
- Military buildings and installations
- Barbed wire/razor wire fences
- Explosion craters

## Key infrastructure and locations where EO are typically placed

- Telecommunication towers
- Electricity pylons
- Dams
- Railway tracks
- Waters sources: wells, riverbanks, etc.
- Shaded areas and fruit trees



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE A SUSPICIOUS ITEM, FIND YOURSELF IN A MINED AREA/FIND A UXO/FIND YOURSELF IN A SUSPECTED FORMER BATTLEFIELD?

## Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

The most effective way to ensure your safety and prevent accidents is to recognize when you may be in or approaching an area that is dangerous. Usually, people who lay mines do not mark the area. However, mine action organizations and local communities do erect official and temporary markings of known dangerous areas.

### Instructions if you think something is a UXO

- ◆ DO NOT approach! DO NOT touch the item! Even if you can't recognize what you've found, move to a safe distance (up to 100 m) and make sure other people do the same.
- ◆ Do not attempt to cover the item with water, dirt or any other object.
- ◆ Do not smoke, light a fire, or carry out work that shakes the ground.
- ◆ If you are near the item when it is spotted - move away.
- ◆ Once you have returned to a safe area, inform the local authorities, community leaders, head of agency and UNDSS of the suspected UXO.

## Improvised Explosive Ordnance (IED)

An IED is defined as a device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating explosive material designed to destroy, disfigure, distract or harass.

### Instructions if you think something is an IED:

- ◆ Be careful of suspicious items. If you have not dropped it, don't approach, touch or pick it up!
- ◆ The number one way to protect yourself and others from an IED is to be alert to your surroundings.
- ◆ Assess the environment around you before taking any action.
- ◆ Loudly warn nearby people about the item. Make sure everyone retreats at least 100 meters away from the object.
- ◆ Do not use a mobile phone or any object that emits radio waves near a suspicious object!
- ◆ Once you have returned to a safe area, inform the local authorities, community leaders, head of agency and UNDSS of the suspected UXO.

## Landmines

A landmine is an explosive device concealed under or on the ground that is triggered as a person or vehicle passes over or near it. Most commonly they are activated by applying pressure to the item or when a tripwire is disturbed. Mined areas often do not look different than unmined areas. As a rule, landmines are usually impossible to see since they are usually buried or concealed in undergrowth.

The two most likely ways you will discover that you are in a mined area are either that there is an explosion, or that you see a mine or mine warning sign. If someone has been injured, you should not rush in to help, as you will endanger yourself and others around you.



If you find yourself in a minefield, stay calm and follow these rules:

- M** **Movement stops immediately.** Stop! Remain still and do not move your feet.
- I** **Inform and warn** the people around you. Call for help but keep others away.
- N** **Notice your surroundings.** What else can you see: mines, tripwires, mine warning signs? Visually locate the nearest safe area: the last place you knew you were on a safe surface, such as a paved road, well used path, concrete or steel structure.
- E** **Evaluate** your course of action. Be prepared to take control.
- D** **Do not move**, if there is no indication of a safe area, or you can't reach it without stepping on unknown ground. Wait for help to arrive.



If no help is coming, you may have to escape the minefield on your own. Retrace the path you took into the contaminated areas. Aim to step in your exact footprints, matching your earlier position as closely as possible. Missing by just an inch could trigger a dormant mine. Remember to also watch out for trip wires as you step. You may not have snagged a wire on the way in, but these near-invisible wires could still be triggered by your passage.



If you have any reason to believe that you have driven into a mined area such as another vehicle detonating a mine, by seeing a mine or mine signs, or if your vehicle has hit a landmine, the following steps should be observed:

**M**

**Movement stops immediately.** Stop the vehicle! Do not attempt to reverse out of the area, and do not move the steering wheel. Be calm and, if possible, stay in the vehicle.

**I**

**Inform and warn** people around you. Call for help but keep others away. Use the car horn to summon help.

**N**

**Notice your surroundings.** What else can you see: mines, tripwires, mine warning signs? Visually locate the nearest safe area: the last place you knew you were on a safe surface, such as a paved road, well used path.

**E**

**Evaluate** your course of action. Be prepared to take control.

**D**

**Do not move**, if there is no indication of a safe area, or you can't reach it without stepping on unknown ground. Wait for help to arrive.

# FOLLOW ON TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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The information contained in this guide is general in nature and should be followed up with a safety briefing by qualified instructors. The Mine Action AoR can arrange with Mine Action organisations to offer Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) specifically tailored for UN, NGOs and CSOs staff. Depending on the needs/locations the sessions can be conducted online or in-person where locations coincide with organisational presence. Different language options may be available. You can also contact UNDSS for further training opportunities on safety and security.

# RELATED POLICIES/ GUIDANCE FOR DETAILED INFORMATION

- Your organization's safety and security policies and standard operating procedures
  - UNMAS Landmines, ERW and IED Safety Handbook
  - Mine Action AoR coordinators: Myanmar.MineAction@humanitarianresponse.info
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