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Pohakuloa fire update

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii – Army emergency and range officials are continuing to monitor and respond to hotspots from the range fire, here.

According to Pohakuloa Training Area's Fire and Emergency Services, the fire is contained and is currently smoldering near Range 3 in the PTA impact area, where it is running out of fuel. Smoke levels are much lower today and will continue to decrease over the next few days.

The area where the fire is located is well within the PTA impact area. It is completely surrounded by lava and road network that are serving as a barrier to stop the fire from spreading. Additionally, the closest vegetation is more than a mile away.

"We anticipate seeing some sporadic spot fires that will continue over the next week due to the duff in this area," said PTA Fire Chief Eric Moller.

Duff is the layer of decaying vegetation found beneath growing vegetation that typically is the main cause of smoldering and flare-ups in brushfires.

"There are two more patches of dense brush/wood mix in the eastern portion of the fire area that haven't burned yet; however with the return of the trades, the winds are blowing from the east, so any active fire is being blown back toward areas that have already burned," Moller said. "The good news is that there are no impacts to threatened or endangered species, range facilities, or critical habitat at this time, and most especially that the fire is contained."

Several community members have raised concerns regarding the fire and depleted uranium (DU) at PTA; however, DU only aerosolizes at very high temperatures, much higher than those temperatures produced by brush or range fires. An [Army study](#) of the impact of prescribed burns on DU also confirmed this.

Additionally, the fire is located approximately two miles from the nearest DU location, and this area is separated from the fire area by a lava field devoid of combustible fuels and vegetation. It is extremely unlikely that the fire will reach the DU area.

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Even if the fire did burn to the DU area, given the nature of the spotting rounds, the environmental data indicating a low potential for DU to become airborne, and the distance to populated areas, it is highly unlikely that the general public would be exposed to DU. Past air samples taken during prescribed range burns have not detected DU.

“We appreciate the community’s interest, and we want to assure the community—especially those of us who live and work in the immediate area—that we take everyone’s safety seriously,” said Lt. Col. Jake Peterson, commander, U.S. Army Garrison-Pohakuloa. “If people do have questions about DU, we encourage them to check out our website and get the facts.”

The Army’s local DU webpage is available at www.garrison.hawaii.army.mil/du/. The site lists frequently asked questions, health and investigative reports, and other DU resources.

The range fire began March 24 at approximately 11:30 a.m. during a combined armed live-fire exercise. To date, the fire has burned approximately 200 acres and has not expanded.