



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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## EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCES

Explosives are chemical compounds or mixtures that violently react when exposed to adequate stimuli. All explosives are sensitive to heat, shock, and friction and require special handling and storage. Generally, an explosive substance is classified as either “safe” or “dangerous” based on its degree of sensitivity and its potential for accidental initiation.

Preliminary investigations or encounters in the field involving explosive substances are one of the most potentially life threatening situations officers can face. The smallest of devices, however plain or innocuous in appearance, has the potential to injure, maim, or fatally wound when not properly handled.

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide descriptions and guidelines to assist officers with the identification, proper handling, and booking of explosive substances.

### “SAFE” EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCES

“Safe” explosive substances include “Safe and Sane” fireworks, smoke bombs, emergency highway flares/fusees, fixed ammunition, and “blank” or saluting cartridges of less than .50 caliber.

#### Fireworks

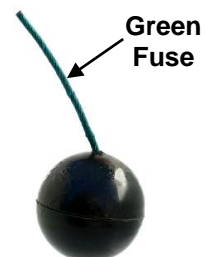
All fireworks are illegal in the City of Los Angeles and shall be booked as evidence whether or not prosecution is sought.



“Safe and Sane” fireworks have the State Fire Marshal’s seal stamped onto the packaging. The seal indicates that the explosive substances contained in the firework have been tested and meet specific safety and performance requirements, but are still illegal. When large quantities of fireworks (more than 10 pounds gross weight) are encountered, booking advice shall be obtained from the Hazardous Devices and Materials Section (HDMS), Emergency Services Division (ESD). All fireworks that do not have this seal are classified as “dangerous” for the purposes of booking into property.

### Smoke Bombs

These items are round, approximately 1" in diameter, and are commonly manufactured in orange, yellow, green, and blue. These items emit smoke only and do not contain any explosives. They have a green hobby cannon fuse approximately 1-½" to 2" in length. These items may be treated and booked in quantities of less than 10 pounds gross weight. When larger quantities are recovered, booking advice shall be obtained from HDMS, ESD.



### Flares/Fusees

Emergency highway flares/fusees are high intensity pyrotechnic signaling devices that are used to direct traffic around roadway hazards. A red standard fusee burns for approximately 15 minutes, in compliance with the Bureau of Explosives Specifications. Emergency highway flares/fusees can be booked into any property room.



However, there are several emergency signaling devices that may not be booked into property without the advice and approval of HDMS because they project or propel their pyrotechnic/incendiary element rather than simply burning it inside its container. Examples of flares/fusees that cannot be booked into property are parachute flares, pop-up flares and marine flares. These types of devices are commercially made and are usually clearly labeled. If there is any doubt regarding the type of flare encountered, immediately contact HDMS for advice prior to handling.

### Fixed Ammunition

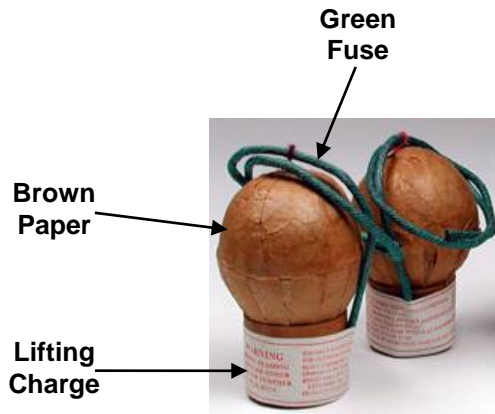
Fixed ammunition is defined as a cartridge comprised of a casing, primer, propellant powder and projectile (bullet). **Ammunition less than .50 caliber can be handled and booked into property without approval of the Hazardous Devices and Materials Section.** Ammunition of .50 caliber or greater requires advice and approval prior to booking because of the quantity of propellant filler involved and the possibility of the rounds having special hazardous characteristics such as incendiary or high explosive tips. The only exception is the .50 cal. A&E (see the size comparison to the right) which can be booked into property without HDMS approval.



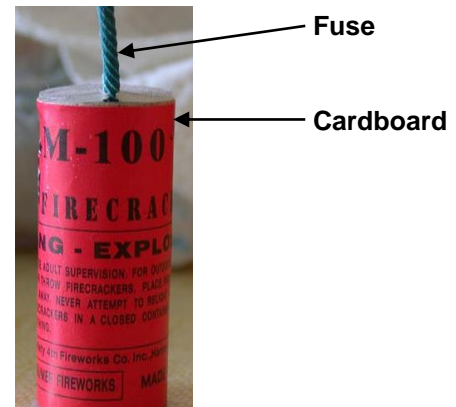
## “DANGEROUS” EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCES

“Dangerous” explosive substances are generally more sensitive to accidental initiation due to their chemical composition or the quantity of explosives involved. “Dangerous” explosive substances include fireworks which do not have the State Fire Marshal’s Seal, agricultural and wildlife fireworks such as seal bombs and bird distracters, and railroad torpedoes.

Fireworks that do not have the State Fire Marshal’s seal have not been tested for chemical composition and performance characteristics. Generally, these types of fireworks explode rather than provide a visual display and they include firecrackers, bottle rockets, “cherry bombs,” “M-80s,” “M-100s,” and mortars. The explosive filler in these devices is commonly flash powder, which is very sensitive and susceptible to accidental initiation.



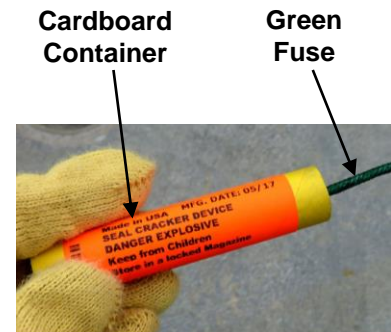
COMMERCIAL MORTAR



TYPICAL “M-100”

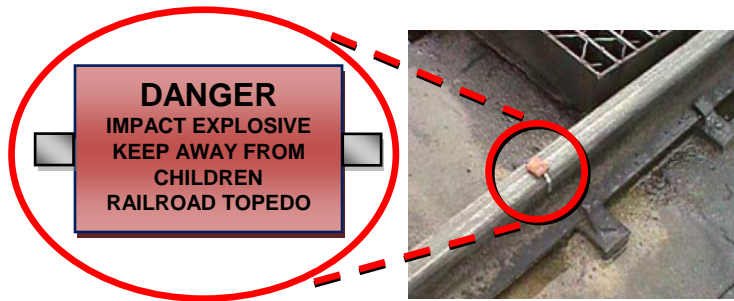
## Agricultural and Wildlife Fireworks

Agricultural and wildlife fireworks (seal bombs, bird distracters, etc.) are approved by the State Fire Marshal, but they require a permit to possess and can be used only under very restricted circumstances. They are usually clearly labeled and have the Fire Marshal’s seal. They should be handled with care like other dangerous fireworks mentioned above because of the quantity of explosives they contain.



SEAL BOMB

## Railroad Torpedoes



Railroad torpedoes are explosive devices that are used to signal a train's crew of dangers with the track. They are 2" x 1-½" red cardboard pouches, attached to the top of the rails with either springs or straps, that explode upon compression.

## BOOKING PROCEDURES

### Booking "Safe" Explosives

"Safe" explosive items are booked in the same manner as any other property. A package containing a "safe" explosive item shall be marked with large red letters indicating the type of explosive substances contained, for example, **Fireworks**, **Flares**, or **Live Ammo**. The types of "Safe" explosives are:

- Fireworks – "Safe and Sane" types (bearing State Fire Marshal seal) and less than 10 pounds gross weight;
- Emergency highway flares/fusees; and,
- Fixed ammunition and blank or saluting cartridges less than .50 caliber.

### Booking "Dangerous" Explosives

All other explosive substances are classified as "Dangerous" and shall only be recovered and booked by HDMS personnel. The HDMS technician who assumes custody of a dangerous explosive substance shall ensure that a Property Report, Form 10.01.00, is completed and distributed as soon as practicable. Common examples of "Dangerous" explosive substances are:

- Fireworks not bearing the State Fire Marshal seal or with a gross weight of 10 pounds or more;
- Firecrackers and similarly constructed explosive devices that do not bear a State Fire Marshal seal, such as cherry bombs, M-80s, and M-100s;
- Agricultural/wildlife types of fireworks;
- Railroad torpedoes; and,
- Ammunition .50 caliber and larger.

**Note:** Officers recovering ammunition .50 caliber or larger shall contact HDMS (ESD), or the Department Operations Center during off-hours. A HDMS technician will determine whether the recovered ammunition is considered “safe” and can be booked at Property Division. In cases when a HDMS technician advises that the ammunition is considered safe to book, officers shall note the name, rank, and serial number of the HDMS technician authorizing the booking on the Property Report, Form 10.01.00.

## **CONCLUSION**

When unable to determine the classification of a suspected explosive substance as “safe” or “dangerous,” officers shall treat the suspected item as “dangerous” and contact HDMS for advice, or the Department Operations Center during off-hours.

**This Bulletin cancels and supersedes Volume XL, Issue 4, Explosive Substances, November 2008**

Field Training Services Unit  
Police Training and Education

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