

Deck Marker Questions and Answers

Q1: Can you describe a deck marker and elaborate on the radiation levels involved?

A1: Roughly the size of a silver dollar, deck markers were typically used in the past by the Navy to light passageways aboard ship. The deck marker found contained a small amount of low level radiological material called radium and is similar to personnel markers that were clipped to service member's helmets to indicate each other's positions at night. California Department of Public Health's scanning of Parcel A has confirmed that the parcel is safe for residents and visitors.

Q2: How do you think the deck marker got there?

A2: The portion of Parcel A where housing is being built was used historically for housing and administrative buildings; scanning results continue to confirm that radiological activities did not occur there. To date, The California Department of Public Health has found no evidence of soil contamination or radiological materials release uncovered by this scan in the housing area. Deck markers were used by the military extensively from 1940s to the 1960s and are sporadically found at military installations. The deck marker was located at the bottom of the hill near the former entrance to the base, near an elevation similar to the historic surface during Navy use, and may have been lost or discarded.

Q3: Based on this finding, is Parcel A still safe?

A3: California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) scanning of Parcel A has confirmed that the parcel is safe for residents and visitors. After completing scanning of over 90% of Parcel A-1 (56 acres total), CDPH has found one elevated reading that is not naturally occurring. Man-made sources from historical Navy activities have not been discovered in the developed and occupied residential areas. Parcel A was used historically for housing and administrative buildings; scanning results collected to date continue to confirm that that radiological activities did not occur there. There has been no evidence of soil contamination.

Q4: Would the hand scanning and towed scanning done in the residential area have found any deck markers if they were present?

A4: The sensitive equipment used by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) can detect items located below the surface that could expose residents to radiation, as evidenced by the detection of the underground, low-level deck marker as well as very minor anomalies such as naturally occurring Potassium-40 in woodchips. The Navy and CDPH are committed to a thorough investigation of Parcel A and are close to completing scans of the accessible areas. CDPH experts regularly execute health and safety scans around California each year and are well versed in determining the proper protocol to ensure public safety.