

Information Data Sheet

Category Aircraft Crashes

Description These were a common occurrence during the exigencies of wartime. Collisions, damage sustained during operational duty, pilot error and adverse weather conditions were all causes for crashes.

The nature of aircraft crashes means that debris was often scattered over a wide area around the crash site, sometimes up to a distance of two miles.



Wreckage of a B-24 Liberator bomber aircraft crash, WWII

Hazard Aircraft crash sites provide a potential source of UXO hazard, largely depending on the type of aircraft that crashed, its operational status, its ordnance load and any efforts made to clear up the crash site. The MoD advises that if crashed aircraft are found, the safest policy is to leave them alone where possible. Unless disturbed there is no statutory requirement for the MoD to clear such sites.

The most common source of ordnance associated with aircraft crash sites is small arms ammunition. This may be scattered over a wide area but does not typically constitute a significant UXO hazard. Some later aircraft designs were armed with cannons, the shells of which contain a higher explosive content.

Bomber aircraft crashing with full or partial bomb loads provide a further potential hazard. If the crash site was inaccessible or remote it would commonly be left during wartime. As such, UXBs may still be present around bomber aircraft crash sites.

It is generally the case that post-WWII crash sites are more thoroughly cleared of debris and residues than those which occurred during wartime.

It should be noted that in some cases where a fatal crash site is located, the disturbance of the site may be prohibited due to its status as a war grave.