



US Army Corps
of Engineers ®

Former Allegheny Arsenal Burial Pits MRS

Pittsburgh, PA

FACTSHEET: April 1, 2025

Authorization: Defense Environmental Restorations Program

Type of Project: Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS)

Congressional Interest: Pennsylvania 12th Congressional District Representative – Summer Lee; Senators John Fetterman and Dave McCormick

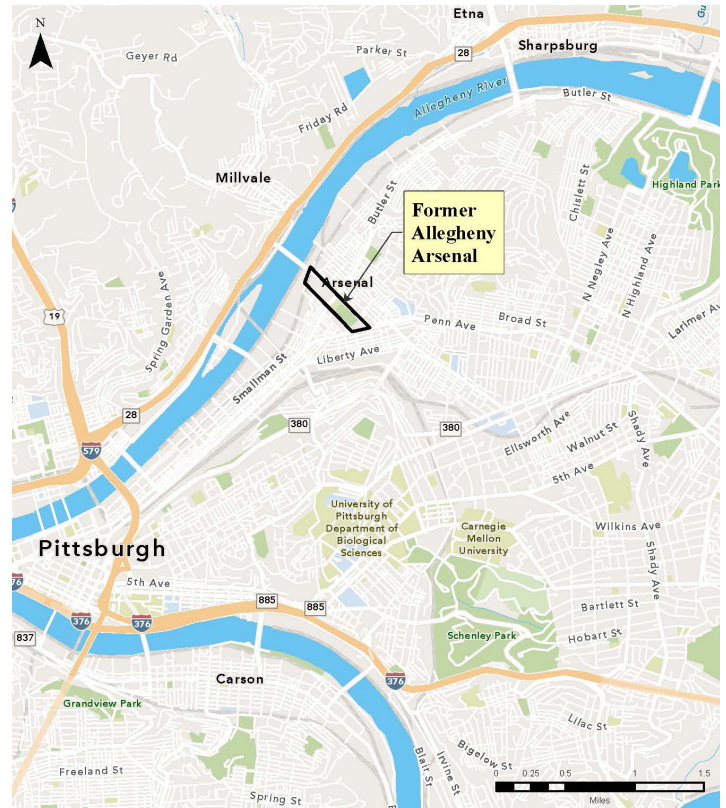
Background: The Allegheny Arsenal was established in 1814 during the War of 1812 and operated as a military facility until 1926. Located on approximately 38 acres in what is now the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh, the arsenal manufactured and stored ammunition, weapons, and other military equipment through the life of the facility.

During the Civil War, the arsenal served as a critical supply center for the Union Army. On September 17, 1862, a devastating explosion at the facility claimed the lives of 78 workers, primarily young women assembling cartridges. This tragedy represents one of the worst civilian disasters of the Civil War era. Following the Civil War, the Arsenal began accepting cannonballs for storage that were eventually stacked outside along the parade grounds for approximately 60 years.

In 1902, the Arsenal officially closed and started selling property off to the southeast of Butler Street for a Marine Hospital and city park to commemorate the accident at the arsenal. In the years to follow, the Arsenal was renamed as the Pittsburgh Storage and Supply Depot and reduced to a 19.75-acre portion northwest of Butler Street. In 1917, a large construction project began at the Storage Depot to build new warehouses. The Allegheny Arsenal Handbook by Tom Powers and James Wudarczyk states that the stacked cannonballs were buried in trenches in 1917 during the construction of the new warehouses. The cannonballs were forgotten about for ~50 years until 1972 when a cannonball burial pit was encountered. Since 1972, 4 additional cannonball burial pits were reported during 2017 and 2020 redevelopment activities (construction of the Arsenal 201 apartment buildings).

Status: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Baltimore District is conducting the first phase of a remedial investigation (RI) for the former Allegheny Arsenal Burial Pits Munitions Response Site (MRS) to determine if additional burial pits remain at the site. This will be done using various types of metal detectors. The goal of the Phase I RI is to identify underground signatures that may represent discarded cannonballs or other military munitions that may still exist at this historic site. Phase I Remedial Investigation (RI) field work includes:

- **Digital Geophysical Mapping using**
 - Advanced Geophysical Classification Sensor
 - Electromagnetics
 - Ground Penetrating Radar



Project Vicinity Map

Schedule:

Spring 2025	Late 2025	Early 2026
Field Work	Review the Remedial Investigation results	Finalize Phase I Remedial Investigation Report

What's Next: Following data collection, data will be processed, analyzed, and documented in a Phase I RI Report. If the data indicates munitions are still present, the report will recommend specific magnetic signatures to further investigate by hand digging in a follow-on Phase II Remedial Investigation. Before that investigation begins, USACE will coordinate with its contractor and develop a plan for the safe removal and disposal of cannonballs, if found during the investigation.

Risks: Risks to current residents and businesses are minimal since there have been no reports of munitions on the surface. This phase of the investigation only involves geophysical surveys and no digging; therefore, there is no additional hazards to the public. Property owners should remain aware of the possible presence of munitions and the change they could be encountered during construction and maintenance activities.



FAQ:

1. What should be done if cannonballs are encountered?

Recognize the potential hazard, retreat from the area and call the police.

2. Am I in any danger?

No. Other than construction and maintenance crews or any site worker engaged in digging, there is no danger to the residents and local business owners.

3. Are there any impacts to local residents or business during fieldwork?

Yes. There may be minor disruptions to parking lots during normal working hours. The project team will work closely with property owners and tenants to schedule the surveys in parking areas.

Review: Review the Administrative Records which contains publicly available project and site documentation located at:

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Lawrenceville
279 Fisk Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

For more information reach out the USACE Public Affairs office at NAP-PAO@usace.army.mil.

