Risks

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Explosion

Threat assessment: A large-calibre ammunition explosion with human casualties is considered likely. Domestically, the risk is unlikely, but considering the war in Ukraine and the lessons drawn from it, the danger may originate from outside Estonia. In the future, situations may arise in which explosives used in Ukraine are smuggled across the border and employed for criminal purposes. Compared with the previous assessment, the likelihood of this risk has increased from unlikely to likely.

Finds of ammunition are mainly connected to the battles of the Second World War, with the highest number of calls typically occurring in four counties: Harju, Ida-Viru, Saare, and Tartu. However, explosive devices may be encountered anywhere across Estonia. Even today, relatively large quantities of wartime ammunition continue to be found on Estonian territory. Excavation or agricultural work, as well as natural landslides, may expose dangerous items. Abandoned wartime and modern ammunition may also be discovered, and handling such material can create an explosion hazard. Construction and forestry activities increase the likelihood of contact with ammunition. Each year, bomb disposal specialists render safe a substantial number of explosive devices:

- 2020: 9,041
- 2021: 6,930
- 2022: 14,985
- 2023: 10,840
- 2024: 6,622

Although the number of explosions caused by explosives in Estonia has fallen significantly compared with the 1990s, it has not dropped to zero. The primary reason is the continued illegal handling of explosives.

THREATS

- It is easy to obtain information from the internet on how to manufacture explosives. In addition to homemade explosives, materials are also sourced from discovered ammunition.

- Since the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine began in 2022, the movement of explosives across Europe has increased, along with the risk of hostilities mistakenly spreading beyond national borders.

- Over time, explosives may become even more dangerous, as protective mechanisms weaken with age, while the explosive material itself does not lose its properties and may become more sensitive.

ACTIONS

Public awareness and involvement are promoted through the Rescue Board’s communication and prevention activities, planned bomb disposal operations, various handover campaigns, travelling exhibitions, and the engagement of volunteers. The risks of explosions are mitigated by carrying out bomb disposal work and raising public awareness.

GUIDELINES

In the event of an explosion hazard:

- Report the danger or discovery immediately to the Emergency Response Centre by calling 112.

- Do not touch or move the explosive object; retreat at least 50 metres away from it.

- Stay behind a building or structure and keep away from windows.

- ✓ Follow official instructions and be prepared for evacuation.

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