



## Freedom of Information Request

**Date of receipt: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**

**Date of response: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

### Freedom of Information request regarding Flare skip fire

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**Request:**

Good afternoon

I'd like to make an access to information request about the skip bonfire of flares at Fort Le Marchant.

Was there a risk assessment done?

What date was the risk assessment done?

Was the impact to immediate natural environment a consideration?

Is there a record of every item that was burnt?

Is there a record of the chemicals in each item to be able assess any ongoing legacy pollution to the immediate environment?

Can those records be published?

Why was no ground protection put down to stop chemicals getting on the ground of a very well used public recreational area?

What measures were put in place to prevent any of the public or their pets from coming in to contact with any toxic chemicals on any walks in the evenings during the days the burn took place?

Wouldnt the NE corner of Longue Hougue reclamation have made less impact to the public/environment to do this?

Would it have been more advisable to burn in smaller quantities than the loading to the gills we saw in the videos and photo in the press that resulted in large explosions and toxic material being spat out on the floor and thick toxic soot billowing out across the common.

I have read that the chemicals in marine flares are Nephrotoxic which can shut down kidneys, even if only small amounts are ingested. Was this a consideration when deciding to do this in a very popular dog walking place?

Was the health and safety executive consulted before the burn and happy with the risk assessment/control measures?

Was the board of health consulted before the burn? What control measures were advised to stop any pollution to the common?

What ongoing clean up works will be done to make sure all chemical residue is removed and of no ongoing danger to the public or animals?

Can a more suitable place than a well used recreational spot be considered as the next choice for a toxic chemical explosive skip fire?

**Response provided by the Committee for Home Affairs:**

This is a 'Freedom of Information' request for access to information recorded and held by the States of Guernsey.

*1. Was there a risk assessment done?*

Yes, there was a risk assessment conducted by a qualified risk assessor, in respect of the safe and efficient disposal of out-of-date marine emergency flares.

*2. What date was the risk assessment done?*

For public and staff safety, strategic risks are assessed for the police handling of all explosives, which includes requiring qualified officers only, appropriate equipment supplied and departmental reviews. This is not publicly accessible for security reasons, but held on the States of Guernsey Risk Management system and available to the Committee for Home Affairs, States Risk Officer and States risk champions.

*3. Was the impact to immediate natural environment a consideration?*

The environmental impact on how such items can be safely disposed on behalf of the community, is carefully considered. The location of the disposals was fully assessed and is considered to be the most suitable location for the operation to take place due to its remote nature and the ability to cordon off the area. The high vantage point also gives operatives the ability to ensure that members of the public or animals whether that be domestic or wild do not breach the cordon.

4. *Is there a record of every item that was burnt?*

Due to the number of flares there is not a full description of each individual flare that is disposed of.

5. *Is there a record of the chemicals in each item to be able assess any ongoing legacy pollution to the immediate environment?*

6. *Can those records be published?*

Details of every disposal is not published however many of the items dealt with by the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team are included in the Chief Officer's Annual Report. These can be found on the Guernsey Police website. [www.guernsey.police.uk](http://www.guernsey.police.uk)

7. *Why was no ground protection put down to stop chemicals getting on the ground of a very well used public recreational area?*

Due to the heat generated by the base of the skip / container used, providing ground cover would be difficult and a potential hazard in itself.

8. *What measures were put in place to prevent any of the public or their pets from coming in to contact with any toxic chemicals on any walks in the evenings during the days the burn took place?*

The area is cordoned off effectively during the disposals and only re-opened when the operatives deem it safe to do so. The disposals take place in Fort Le Marchant firing range where other ammunitions are discharged on a regular basis and the ability to cordon the area off is paramount.

9. *Wouldn't the NE corner of Longue Hougue reclamation have made less impact to the public/environment to do this?*

Longue Hougue, St Sampson, reclamation site has previously been considered and risk assessed. Due to the densely populated area, businesses and chemical storage etc and the inability to effectively and safely cordon the area, this location is not deemed to be suitable.

10. *Would it have been more advisable to burn in smaller quantities than the loading to the gills we saw in the videos and photo in the press that resulted in large explosions and toxic material being spat out on the floor and thick toxic soot billowing out across the common.*

The skip was not fully loaded as suggested. The skip has a 60cm layer of earth in the bottom then a clear space of about 60cm where there is then a large metal grate. The metal grate is fixed inside to allow the flow of air. To facilitate the disposal, layers of mixed pyrotechnics are placed on the grid. The image does not show the skip in its empty state which would assist gauging the volume of flares that were burnt. Parts of the pyros do exit the skip due to the doors having a small gap, to allow air flow to increase the burn rate.

*11. I have read that the chemicals in marine flares are Nephrotoxic which can shut down kidneys, even if only small amounts are ingested. Was this a consideration when deciding to do this in a very popular dog walking place?*

The percentage of marine flares that contain nephrotoxins are minimal. A risk assessment is in place to ensure that the disposal is conducted safely and effectively and further that the cordon is at a suitable distance to prevent members of the public from being close to the disposal site.

*12. Was the health and safety executive consulted before the burn and happy with the risk assessment/control measures?*

Police conduct the disposals in a method approved by the Chief Health and Safety Officer.

*13. Was the health and safety executive consulted before the burn and happy with the risk assessment/control measures?*

*14. Was the board of health consulted before the burn? What control measures were advised to stop any pollution to the common?*

Meetings are held by stakeholders concerned in the disposal of flares and includes members of the Police Force, the Chief Health and Safety Officer, the Hazardous Waste Technical Officer, the Operations Manager for Guernsey Waste and the Senior Environmental Health Officer. The date for the disposal was flagged within the previous meeting between stakeholders. No additional control measures were advised on this particular occasion.

*15. What ongoing clean up works will be done to make sure all chemical residue is removed and of no ongoing danger to the public or animals?*

The practice following a disposal is that the responsibility for removing and disposing the contents of the skip lies with Guernsey Waste who are also responsible for ensuring the area around the base of the skip is returned to normal.

*16. Can a more suitable place than a well used recreational spot be considered as the next choice for a toxic chemical explosive skip fire?*

There will shortly be a routine meeting between Guernsey Police, Health & Safety and Public Waste Officials, during which the concerns that you have mentioned will be raised.