

Explosives Storage Area (ESA)



The Explosives Storage Area (ESA) is part of the Ground Facilities group, managed by QinetiQ at MoD Boscombe Down in Wiltshire. Supported by an active airfield, it offers customers the capability to carry out their weapon preparation and flight testing requirements at a secure facility which is manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The ESA is licensed by the Health and Safety Executive and consists of a securely fenced compound with 32 buildings for the storage and use of Class 1 explosives.

There are 2 dedicated buildings for the preparation and testing of all types of live and inert aircraft and helicopter weapons systems and components, and aircraft safety related explosive components including:

- Ammunition for Aircraft and Small Arms
- Countermeasure Flares
- Free Fall and Guided Bombs
- Air to Air and Air to Ground Missiles
- Rocket Systems
- Torpedoes
- Pyrotechnics
- UAV booster motors and Towed Flares

Both Preparation Buildings have conductive flooring and are fitted with an overhead hoist. Mechanical Handling Equipment is available for the loading and off-loading of vehicles and the movement of inert and live weapons on the Boscombe Down site. A bipolar rig is available for the Moment of Inertia calculation of inert weapons and stores up to 550kg in weight. The ESA is also permitted to acquire and keep Section 5 prohibited weapons.

As well as the main site, the ESA is responsible for the Stop Butt and Pit Drop facilities at Boscombe Down.

Stop Butt.

The Stop Butt is available for testing of on/off aircraft fixed gun installations and crew served weapons up to 30mm. The site has a pan with a selection of Aircraft tie-down points, and a control building allows for full testing of gun installations

Pit Drop Facility

The Pit Drop facility tests aircraft weapon release systems in a controlled environment. This facility consists of a pan with a purpose in-built pit, 6.8m x 1.2 m x 1.5m deep, allowing for the dropping of inert weapons and stores from aircraft pylons and weapon points using mechanical and explosive operated release equipment.

The Explosives Storage Area is manned by well trained armament staff, experienced in the storage, handling, preparation and transport of explosives. They are able to offer information and advice on a wide range of aircraft weapons.

For further information on the ESA facilities and capabilities please contact.

Andy Miell

ESA Manager

Bldg 469

MOD Boscombe down

Salisbury

Wiltshire

SP4 0JF

Tel: +44 (0)1980 2907

apmiell@QinetiQ.com

Or

Customer Contact Team

Tel: +44 (0) 8700 100942

www.QinetiQ.com

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