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Faux grenades litter landfill

OPERATIONS HALTED UNTIL ITEMS IDENTIFIED

By LAITH AGHA
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Officials at the Monterey Peninsula Landfill have a request: If you want to get rid of something that looks like a grenade or rocket, don't just throw it in the trash.

Landfill workers have discovered eight items in the past six months that look like ordnance, one of which proved to be a live smoke grenade. In each instance, Monterey Regional Waste Management District officials have had to shut down operations while bomb experts inspect the suspicious devices.

"This is not the place to send your suspect explosive devices," said Gary Metzler, the district's safety manager.

The other items turned out to be either inert devices used for military training — possibly at Fort Ord — or materials that closely resembled rockets and grenades. No one has been injured.

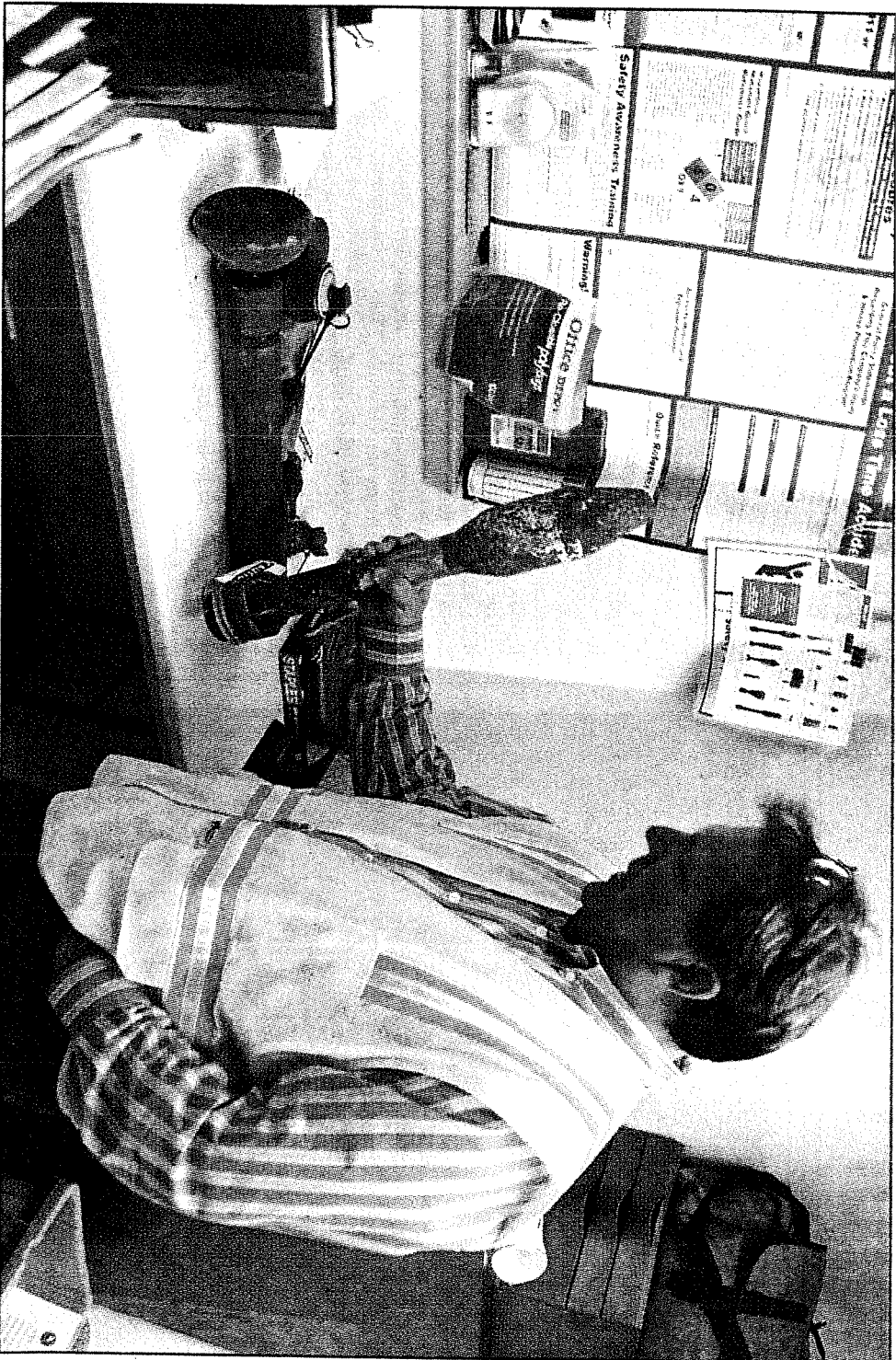
While it is not unheard of for such things to show up at a landfill, the Peninsula site is getting more than its fair share, said Tim Flanagan, the district's assistant general



DAVID ROYAL/The Herald

Some of the grenadelike items found at the landfill are inert devices used for military training.

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Tim Flanagan, assistant general manager at the Monterey Peninsula Landfill, holds an inert training rocket alongside other recently recovered ordnance. "This has been an unusual cluster," he says. "I don't know if everyone's doing spring cleaning or what."

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manager.

"This has been an unusual cluster," Flanagan said. "I don't know if everyone's doing spring cleaning or what."

Metzler said one of the items was just plumbing and car parts fastened together to look like a rocket, but "you don't know it's

fake unless you know what it is. We don't want to find out it was live, and our first warning is when it goes off."

Every time one of these devices is discovered, sheriff's deputies are called in, said Metzler. Deputies then contact the 787th Ordnance Company based at Moffett Field in Mountain View, which is summoned to examine the findings.

Operations have been interrupted for up to five hours, said

Flanagan.

Last week, Flanagan said, an object resembling an M67 hand grenade was found, although bomb experts did not identify it.

Flanagan advises anyone who has such devices not to handle them, but to call local authorities — especially if it is unknown whether they are real. Flanagan asks those who don't know what they have to identify their items at the dump to help the district avoid the

bomb-squad hassle.

"If you know it's just grandpa's doorstop, identify it because we don't know what it is," said Flanagan. "We have some people who are pretty good at identifying these things, but they're not MacGyver; they're not Jack Bauer."

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